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G L A P H Y R A

AND OTHER POEMS

BY FRANCIS REYNOLDS, [pseudon.].

AUTHOR OF

'ALICE RUSHTON AND OTHER POEMS'

Francis Reynolds Stationer.

LONDON

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GLAPHYRA.

B

GLAPHYRA.

AN amber glory trembled in the east
 Beyond the peaks of Taurus' misty range ;
Unmarked awhile, its stealthy marge increased,
 While of her guards the dim world made exchange
While the hot day resigned its watchful height
 To stars that led the vanguard of the night.

Then slowly, as a nymph whose foamy feet
 Would dance unheard upon the gleaming sand,
Rises at midnight from some arched retreat,
 Yet, pausing, dreads a mortal on the strand,
And for a while her trembling bosom rests
 Between the walls of two succeeding crests ;

So from the cradle of two guardian peaks
Moved slowly up the now declining moon,
Quenching the latest of those rosy streaks—
Those last faint stragglers of the routed noon ;
Broadening the plain with still ascending rays
As stooped Love's planet through the western haze.

Then Iris, gliding softly by the walls
Of hushed Comana, caught the glare, and lay
A silver lake amid the dreaming halls,
Amid the olives that confined his way
With solid battlements of sable shade,
Whence silence spake, and sound returned afraid.

At such an hour did peerless Glaphyra—
Daughter of her whose all-prevailing charms
Bought back from Egypt's Antony the sway
Of fruitful Pontus, lost to Roman arms—
Steal from the feast whose mirth was surging high
To deck her beauty for the bridegroom's eye.

Thrice wedded and twice widowed, still she wore
The sovereignty of nature in her face ;
Though Love besought him, Time could not restore
Her youth once past away, yet, in its place,
Had left that grave perfection which appears
The ripened fruit of not unclouded years.

Yet even now flashed forth upon her cheek
The fiercer passion of an age gone by,
As when at eve long-shrouded sunbeams break
Through the moist curtains of a storm-swept sky,
And earth looks up to welcome with delight
A second dawn arising ere the night.

For, unrebuked, her soul had wandered back
Beyond her widowed wilderness of pain,
Beyond that later grief in whose dark track
Peace, scarce restored, was overwhelmed again,
And placed her present being side by side
With that sweet time when she was first a bride.

As one who from a newly conquered height
Marks out the road whereon his steps have been
Scaling some hill that bounds the range of sight,
And measures not the space that lies between ;
So did remembrance entertain her gaze
With misty thoughts of far removèd days.

For not by love that second nuptial fire
Was kindled on the first's yet smouldering bed,
Nor that her still unsatisfied desire
Dried up so soon the streams by memory fed,
But that she might some sweet distraction know
Against the thrust of too persistent woe.

But now (ah ! wherefore ?) to her life returned
The restless ardour of a passionate love,
And in the fierceness of its rage she burned
All the dead hopes which time could not remove,
As burn the fallen glories of the year
Ere winter brings reviving Spring-tide near.

Victorious night hath now confirmed her reign ;
Her star-built empire holds the world in thrall,
And all things sleep save those whose wakeful pain
Doth watch for morning ; in the banquet hall
Dark shadows crouch beneath each canopy,
Like phantoms of the revelry gone by.

And in that bridal chamber all is still ;
The silver lamp burns faint against the wall,
Shedding soft light on those whose yielding will
Hath long been slave to sleep that conquers all ;
That conquers love as certainly as death,
Steals sense and life, and only leaves the breath.

Yet stirs she now, that thrice anointed queen,—
Yet shrinks she now, impatient, from the side
Of him whose presence but so late had been
The realm in which her love was glorified ;
Now wake the slumbering roses in her cheek,
Her ripe lips move as lips that strive to speak.

Her soul hangs yet between desire and doubt;
Is it a dream? she asks (ah! treacherous love,
So valiant once, so quickly put to rout!);
Com'st thou to bless, or com'st thou to reprove?
Drop down the shrouding mantle from thy face,
That I may see thee ere my arms embrace.

O my heart's husband! O my best desire!
Lord of the joys whose scent seems yet divine!
Lord of the memories which may not expire
Until (sweet hope!) my dust is mixed with thine!
Though fate so far divides us, grant me this—
To hear thy voice, to snatch once more the kiss—

The last fond kiss I planted on thine eyes
When sank thy life, outworn for lack of ease,
When passed thy spirit like a wind that dies
Amid the shade of gloomy cypress trees;
So shall I mourn thy weary absence less—
So take some comfort to my loneliness!

He stands, he hears ; yet still his silent grasp
Folds the dark mantle round his shadowy form,
No hands leap forth to meet the yearning clasp
That craves his own ; like breaths that herald storm
Creep from his lips half syllables, half sighs,
Matching the mournful anger of his eyes.

‘ Hear me, O woman—woman as thou art
Thus oft to change the path of thy desires—
And when thou hearest, let thy stricken heart
Record my words as if eternal fires
Had burnt them deep upon thy marble breast ;
Perchance such seed will bear thee fruit of rest.

‘ Not only for the sharp revengeful blow,
Struck by a hand that lurketh in the dark,
Exchanging for a man’s corporeal foe
A blood-stained phantom, terrible and stark,
That haunts the shattered temple of his peace
Until his life, but not his torments, cease ;

‘ Not only for the act of him whose eyes,
 Taught by his heart’s most foul inhuman lust,
 Walk through the world in search of some sweet
 prize—

Some wife’s pure fame, some maiden’s tender trust ;
 Whose fierce desire anticipation feeds
 Till thought becomes the tyrant of his deeds :—

‘ Not for such sins alone the judging gods
 (Gods are they, woman, though contemned their
 wills,)

Prepare the rigour of chastising rods—

Devouring strife, or want that slowly kills ;
 For stripes there are that leave a deeper smart
 Bought by the secret practice of the heart.

‘ Murder hath made a covenant with death,
 The dark adulterer shrinks before the day,
 But silent hate doth poison all the breath,
 And lust that dares not burns the soul away ;
 Such wrath remains for him that acts a lie,
 That wears the mask of loathed hypocrisy.

‘ O faithless ! ask thy breast’s impartial lord,
Before whose seat I hold thee now arraigned,
If aught on earth can blot the soul’s true word,
If love can change, and yet be love unfeigned ?
And when that judge hath made his stern reply,
Chastise the heart which taught thy tongue to lie.

‘ Can life requicken pulses that have ceased ?
Can Time give back the years which once have
been ?
Can day retrace his footsteps to the east,
Or second April make the sear leaves green ?
Or shall some mother watch her dreaming child
And take no leave of girlhood’s flowery wild ?

‘ With gods such things might be ; but unto men
And to all things that hold their sympathy,
No fruit once plucked can blossom forth again,
No withered plant grow young before it die ;
But every gift falls singly from above—
One life, one youth, and one consuming love.

‘One love, false queen, whose best delights are strange
 With drops of blood and thorns of agony,
 That changeth not though seas and hills should change,
 And stars deny their fixed eternity ;
 Whose power declares all other sins forgiven,
 Brings heaven to earth, or builds up hell in heaven.

‘Ah ! surely once I deemed such love was mine,
 When I laid bare my secret heart to thee !
 But from this base delinquency of thine
 There springs a sword to murder constancy ;
 When shrinks away the failing noontide’s spark
 Shall men much marvel if the night be dark ?

‘Hadst thou forgot the many words we said,
 Hadst thou forgot the converse of our eyes,
 On that sweet day when love was perfected
 And tutored patience grasped the waiting prize ;
 The pleasant hours that rocked us, the delights
 That made the days seem short as Summer nights ;

‘Then might my heart have set thee free from blame,
Have watched unmoved thy passion based anew,
And to itself have taken all the shame
That blots the name of treaties broken through ;
Or haply thought that for some high intent
The gods that deep forgetfulness had sent.

‘But thou hast not forgotten ; thou hast laid
Thy first affection wantonly aside,
Like one who casts a mistress in the shade
To grasp the wealth of some more lawful bride ;
This hast thou done ; and wilt thou too disown
The offspring once so valued as thine own ?

‘Wilt thou discard the golden-haired content,
The pure soft sweetness of love’s early reign,
Still growing up within life’s tenement
Though that which bore them may not bear again ?
It must be so ; the children of one mother
Dwell not beneath the roof that holds another.

‘ Yet think not, though departed from thy sight,
 That they shall view thee as a thing unknown
 Shall not their mother teach them to requite
 The wrong which is their heritage alone ?
 Shall not their swords be sharp to penetrate
 The breast whose scorn was parent to their hate ?

‘ So much in wrath ; so much the gods have spoken,
 As through my lips, to warn thee of thy crime ;
 Yet they permit me not to leave unbroken
 The grief which even holds me in that clime
 Where sorrow comes not often ; lend thy heed
 While for myself these softer accents plead.

‘ O once my wife ! through years beloved apart !
 Hast thou then read the page of life so ill
 As e'er to dream that heart is lost to heart
 When falls that stroke which bids the clay lie still ?
 Seems it to thee so hard to understand
 A love that lives though hand is dead to hand ?

‘ Lo ! many days, while yet my tomb was spread
With the first garlands of memorial care,
I walked with thee as if I were not dead,
Pained with the sharpness of thine own despair
Pained that the fierce despondency of grief
Shut from thy heart my whispers of relief.

‘ But time gave back the calm he snatched away
In lonely spots, or when the hour of rest
Made keen the pain half blunted through the day,
Then did we meet, not laying breast to breast
But soul to soul ; the hours became as years,
Thy child was comfort, born with many tears.

‘ I saw thee, sweet, when other hands than mine
Unloosed thy zone, but loved thee not the less,
Nor hated him whose heart could well divine
That thou wert with me in thy loneliness,—
Him whose worn spirit often passed me by
To talk with one more worthy far than I.

‘ Himself condemned in bitterness to steep
 A bridegroom’s crown ; thou, weary of the sun,—
 Two wrecks that drifted lonely on the deep,—
 Well might ye cast your sorrows into one !
 As youth to youth, so pain to suffering flies,
 For life grows kind with equal sympathies.

‘ Too soon he died ; ah ! much too soon for thee !
 But not for him whose only strong desire
 Was for the grave that might his entrance be
 To one more loved ; thou sawest his funeral pyre ;
 Did then those flames seem cruel ? yet there came
 A day that burned me with a fiercer flame.

‘ Canst thou pourtray the grief of one that comes
 From weary travel, recked among the dead,
 Who seeks his wife mid loved ancestral homes
 And finds some lord established in his stead ?
 Perchance ; but not the anguish of that day
 When from my touch thy spirit turned away ;

‘ When first I marked the raiment of thy choice,
Thy calm, pure thoughts, grow wanton with the
night,

Heard grief rebuked, and memory’s changeful voice
Checked in the songs which once were thy delight ;
When I beheld a passion born of dust
Throned in the room of all-conceding trust.

‘ Doth the vexed merchant, with his port in sight,
Cast forth his bartered treasures to the sea ?
Or doth the freedman once again unite
The broken links which lately cast him free ?
Doth any feel returning sense of ease,
Yet grasp the skirts of lingering disease ?

‘ If such there were, thy soul’s offence might find
A kindred deed among the lists of Time,
But ’tis the madness only of the mind
That weighs up peace with one short hour of crime ;
That calls on earth to fix eternal bars
Across the path which leadeth to the stars.

‘ Think yet once more,—the dawn begins to break
 With breezy warnings to the soul that stays ;—
 Shalt thou remember all thou dost forsake
 When age brings on the round of loveless days ?
 Shalt thou remember it, and feel content
 That to such end thy patience hath been spent ?—

‘ And me alone in that unbounded space,
 Sad without thee, with whom my joy began ;
 Weary of years which keep so soft a pace
 That suns grow cold in watching out their span ;—
 Blaming thee, death, in thine own act expired,
 Curst with thy curse, existence undesired ! ’

As the warm breathing of the southern gale,
 When days grow longer, melts the first thin snow
 That robes the hillside half-way to the vale,
 Dropping it gently to the streams below ;
 And week by week, as the long nights expire,
 Scales slope by slope and camps its army higher ;—

Till, beaten back and pausing to re-form,
It calls from far the rush of April rains,
Ascends the crumbling citadels by storm
And hurls them down to inundate the plains;
And to its thunder hears the loud reply
Of swollen rivers whitening to the sky ;—

So gently crept the first regretful tear
Across the field of that fair listener's cheek,
But while he spake they travelled faster there,
And when the gloom no longer heard him speak
Her heart's long frost was wholly cleft in twain,
And grief flowed down in one continuous rain.

Weep, weep, sad queen ;—and in thy weeping lose
All thought of life, all thought of time gone by,
Save of that hour which bade thee not refuse
His deep desire who owned thy sovereignty ;
Save of that hour revealing each to each
Through faint and wondering embassies of speech.

Weep, weep, for this ;—and feel thyself cast out
 Beyond the gate of those Elysian meads
 Which then thou saw'st environing about
 The flowery path of love-directed deeds ;
 And see thy way for ever tending down
 To depths of woe and loneliness unknown.

Then calm thy breast, once more lift up thine eyes,—
 Look through the watery curtain of thy tears
 And see the face that frowned upon thee rise
 Beauteous with light ; such smile the morning wears
 When peace looks forth across the storm-swept land,
 And all the west with one bright arch is spanned.

Again he speaks : ‘O love, be comforted ;
 Man is but weak and passion oft too strong ;
 For the sweet sake of days when we were wed,
 And for thy grief my soul forgets its wrong ;
 Each tear that fell became a flood to sever
 Thy heart from earth, and make thee mine for ever.

‘Hear now the end ; the gods’ avenging sword
Strikes in the dark, but mercy is not blind ;
Her sweet pure glance hath wandered hitherward,
Her voice hath taught destruction to be kind ;
Her righteous scale hath weighed thy destiny,—
‘Twere pain to live, and lo ! she bids thee die.

‘ Come forth, sweet spirit, from thy house of clay,
Come forth and leave thy dead griefs with the dead ;
Stretch forth thy hands and we will fast away,—
The night grows old, the dawn grows faintly red ;
Cease gently, breath ; close softly, wearied eyes ;
Lie still, cold dust ; O soul, arise, arise ! ’

Soon Taurus crowned his earliest peaks with fire,
The moon waxed cold against the western blue,
Sound broke from silence, life began to tire
Of those vague dreams which sleep regardeth true ;
Quick breezes roughed the river’s tranquil flow,
And streets grew loud with passings to and fro.

But she waked not to whose unrivalled fame
How many a lute had warbled down the day !
With lips that smiled through which no breathing
came,
And cold clasped hands, all-beautiful she lay,
Still as a bark whose weary sails are furled
Above the waters of an unknown world.

CEPHALUS AND PROCRIS.

I.

The summit of a lofty mountain in the Eastern Caucasus; time, towards evening; CEPHALUS awaking from sleep.

EOS.

ART thou then waked? too long hath been thy slumber;

Long, long these eyes have fixed themselves where thine

Lay hid within their chambers; long these lips
Have vainly sought to feed their strong desire
On thine scarce-parted to the breath that mocked
Thy cheek's death-paleness; long—(ah! who can tell
How long the hours to her that loves and waits?)
Impatient thought has tutored this slow tongue
With words of passionate meaning, to prevent

The upbraiding voice that haply rises up
To stab my heart with coldness. As, perchance,
In some deserted tract of that far earth
From which at dawn I brought thee, dreaming, hither,
The night-surrounded wanderer lets his glance
Range round the horizon where the east should be,
To see the mingling peaks of cloud and land
Pierced with the first faint greyness of the day
That bids his hope return ; or, in the pause
Of hurrying winds that teem with cries of death,
Strains all the keenest pulses of his hearing
To catch far off the melancholy song
Of some hoarse stream, whose rugged course shall
lead
To the rude homes of shepherds ;—so my love
Has wandered homeless through thine hours of sleep ;
So watched thine eyes ; so listened, half in dread,
For the deep sighs of waking, which should bring
Or the fulfilment of its long desire,
Or the still longer agonies of scorn ;—

Scorn, the sharp pain of whose empoisoned shaft
Dies but with him that feels it. But thou wakest,
And doubt grows calm. Yet wherefore shouldst thou
wake ?

While thou didst sleep these arms encircled thee,
Upon this breast thy head was softly pillow'd,
My locks were mixed with thine, and in my heart
Methought I felt the force of that strong love
Which wins because it doubts not of its power.
O sleep once more ! for in the threatening shade
That leadens all the wandering lights of ocean,
The sailor marks no surer sign of storm
Than speaks to me from out the conscious depths
Of thy stern eyes which fix themselves on mine !
Ah me ! my dream is ended with thy slumber,
And even now thy captive hands grow rude
To break the bands that hold thee ! Sleep once
more ;—
It may be thou shalt dream ; that she whose star
Already 'gins to fleck the westering blue

With arrowy shafts of silver, will bestow
Some glimpse of that great passion which forgets—
Forgets, forsakes, the narrow walks of Time,
And bends the eternal heavens to its will.
Then shalt thou wake, and in thy waking see
No form but mine; undimmed by any thought
Of that poor hearth by which, amid thy joys,
Sits direful Chance with ghosts of misery,
Thy soul shall taste the limitless delight
Of love still fresh eternally enjoyed
Which only gods may reach to; sleep once more.

CEPHALUS.

Who art thou, goddess?

EOS.

Dost thou know me not?

CEPHALUS.

I know thee not; there is not on thy brow,
Nor in the hand which I, awaking, felt

Smoothing the sleepwrought tangle of my hair,
Such sign of great dominion as betrays
The queen of earth, or she who nightly came
To wake the Latmian hunter with her love.
Yet may I call thee goddess ; for there floats
A glorious calm about thy head ; thy cheek
Reveals no faint beginning of the lines
That deepen year by year with those strange sorrows
Which men must taste of ; and, as oft a cloud
Drifted athwart the pathway of the sun
What time he spurns the misty verge of morning,
Scarce dims, yet rounds his brightness into form ;
So doth the careless mantle which enfolds
Thy too resplendent beauty, make more plain
The shape of one whom never cycling change
Can fright with threats of ruin. I behold
Thy bosom, neck, and azure-veinèd temples
Flushing with stronger pulses from the heart
Than age can tame ; and even now thy voice
Brought to my ears far other sounds than dwell

In the sweet utterance of equal vows.
There came a fear upon me, like the shade
That sits on him who knows his end foretold,
And mid the clashing tumult of the battle
Sees more than mortal arms ;—I woke to feel
Thy touch of love, yet in my waking trembled,
As if my soul had reached the farthest bound
Of this so loved existence, and had gazed
Into that world of fathomless conjecture,
Which, like an ocean, circles all we know.
Let me return,—I cannot dwell with thee ;
Thou art not such a one as she whom late
I left still teaching to the yielding couch
The gentle lines of beauty ; whose warm tears,
One short month past, kept melancholy time
To the last-waved farewells with which her hands
Sent back her heart's fond greeting to the days
Of unreturning childhood ; whom I led,
With soothing words and many a soft embrace,
Through the expectant portals of my home

That laughed a thousand welcomes. There, perchance,

Through this long day—for is it not the night

That lifts her sable banner once again

In the moist east?—her thoughts have tuned themselves

To this sad burden, ‘ wherefore comes he not ? ’

And in her fancy me she haply sees

Lost in the heedless wanderings of the chase,

Or at the foot of some disastrous crag

A mangled prey for eagles. Therefore, goddess,

Let me return ; nor let thy rage pursue

The steps of him who reads his fate so well—

That fate to which methinks the gods themselves

Confess submission—that he dares refuse

The unproportioned honor, which to hold

Would hold him bound between the earth and heaven,

An atom from the universe cut off ;

By men forgot, and to the offended eyes

Of those high Powers whose nature suits with thine,

A thing by its presumption self-condemned
To feel the unsparing thunders of their wrath.
Have I not heard what portents strange and dire
Frighted the earth, when, mid the woods of Crete,
Orion, fairest of that race divine
Whose fame still floats around the echoing banks
Of swift Asopus, fell beneath the shaft
Of the chaste sister of the Delian god ?
The sea grew pale ; the hills grew dark ; the sun
Quenched all his noontide brightness, like a torch
Dropped in the bosom of a midnight pool ;
And from the chambers of a cloud that hung,
With threat of instant fall, in the mid air,
Came sounds of dreadful import, which the stars,
Hearing, forsook their ancient palaces,
And swept in reeling dance athwart the sky.
Then ceased that regal heart ; and evermore
When in the pastures of repeopled heaven
The level glory of his falling belt
Weighs up the dawn, before whose silent steps

The avenging huntress holds her silver bow ;
Then all the deep resounds with pitiless storm ;
The day grows dim with tears ; and on the hills
Not seldom doth the Father's fiery bolt
With sudden wreck affright the bellowing crags.
Such teaching need the venturesous sons of earth,
Lest they, grown bold through long security,
Should tempt the doom of that presuming man
Who thought to scale the eternal battlements
By the curst ladder of unequal love.
She could not save him, goddess ; canst thou me ?
O therefore snatch not from me, for the sake
Of this fair flower of youth, which not for long
Can be thy treasured agent of delight,
All the grand fruit which Time brings slowly forth
To him, who, joined in action with his peers,
Climbs up the steps of knowledge, one by one,
And from the height of his experience sees,
More clearly spread, the oft perplexèd streams
Of Cause, and Chance, and strong-willed Circumstance,

That, from the borders of the Infinite,
Wind through the many pastures of his being.
Such be my portion, goddess ; and for thee
(If Time indeed hath any fellowship
With the calm joys of immortality),
It shall not grieve thee in the years to come
That thou hast left me freely to pursue
My course by lot, until the golden wand
Shall lead me down to that dividing stream
Of silent death, to pass I know not whither.

Lo ! while I speak methinks there comes a change
Across thy listening face ; thy beauty seems
Less terrible, and in thy softening eyes
Shines such a tender and regretful light
As I have marked within the glance of one
Whose soul looks backward to the days far off,
And sees them better than the days at hand.
Let me depart ; yet tell me ere I go
A name to call thee by, for thou should'st be
A piteous guardian to the child of sorrow.

EOS.

Alas! fond youth, thou speakest of the doom
Of one who, mortal, feeleth but the stroke
That cuts his life in twain; but canst thou tell
What unknown depths of passionate despair
She needs must visit, whose earth-stooping love
Finds scorn, yet cannot find the pleasing shade
Of that forgetful sleep which men call death?
Ah me! what restless anguish hath been mine
Since that fair dawn, when, from this watchful height,
I saw the blinded hunter (whose loved name,
Breathed from thy lips, hath weakened all my will)
Come wandering helpless through the echoing glens,
Seeking the light which at my touch alone
Could pierce the caverns of his suffering eyes.
Ah youth! 'twas piteous to behold his hands
Grasping the empty corners of the air
To raise his stumbling footsteps; then he stood,
And from his breast sent forth a groan so deep

That all the hills groaned answer, and far off,
Dispersed in fear, the circling eagles fled.

I heard, and straightway from my bosom fell
All the stern armour of indifferent calm
Which is their heritage whose seats are fixed
Above thy world of passion; swiftly then
I left the height, and swiftly bent my way
Down toward yon sable regiments of pines
That camp around this airy citadel.

The mists rose up to meet me, and the crags
Blushed at my coming, while from peak to peak
Leapt the white standard of the perfect day.
Him soon I reached;—O fool! that didst not know
That she who pities cannot choose but love!
My touch was on his eyelids, and my feet
Would fain have passed him; but within his arms,
Outstretched to clasp his joy, he held me bound.
O heart! half human now through many pangs,
Then didst thou play the traitor; then resign
The power divine which to a single glance

Can lend more death than frowns in myriad spears !
'Twas sweet to yield ; yet never found again
Shall be thy ancient glory ; thou shalt dwell,
Immortal, in thy loveless solitude ;
Scorned by thy peers, and doomed to reap thy joy,—
Whatever joy wherein thou may'st forget
Thy self-wrought chastisement,—from things of earth
That dread thee most ; for thou hast pitied, loved,
And in that weak compassion thou hast fallen.

CEPHALUS.

Art thou then she, the goddess of the morning,
Who loved the great Orion ?

EOS.

I am she ;

Fear not, but hearken. Not because he loved,
Nor in revenge for my displeasing choice,
Fell that renownèd mortal ; but because
My power had clothed him with a life so strong

That death could touch him not, nor Time impair
His godlike beauty. This to him I gave
In that sweet moment when his first embrace
Subdued the god within me ; else my presence,
Despite my will, had blasted his delight,
And with excess of evil marred the good.
Should I give light, and take the life away ?
Therefore they feared him in the lofty courts
Where sits the all-judging Father ; for there runs
A dark yet certain word of prophecy,
Which, breathed in heaven, makes all the glory dim
Around the head of each foreboding god ;
That one descended from the tribes of men
Shall, in the times hereafter, stretch his rule
Above the wreck of those celestial thrones.
Therefore they feared him ; yet the sad decree
That held him doomed to expiating death,
Could harm him not, until that direful noon
Went out in lawless midnight ; then he fell,
The prince of all things beautiful ; the star

Whose early setting hastened up the storm
That needs must vex my heart's clear firmament
While old regrets can call up new desires.
But fear thou not ; for not to such a doom
I brought thee from that fruitless realm of love
To which, by man's too straitened ordinance,
Youth's free delights had wept to see thee chained ;—
Should I, that love thee, woo thee to thy ruin ?
Therefore I held thee in these bands of sleep
While upward toiled the day, and while he fell,
Oft hid by clouds that muttered notes of wrath,
Through the hushed chambers of the western hours ;
Lest thou should'st rudely gaze upon the light
Which to behold, unminished, is not given
To mortals, their mortality unchanged.
But when, as now thou seest, the shadowy line
That bounds the sombre empire of the night
Had slowly climbed yon eastward range, and left
But here and there a yet illumined crest
Like rosy tents in heaven ; then my care

Unchained each captive sense, and left thee free
To tread at will the backward paths of waking.
Deny me not ; thou shalt not wholly leave
Her to whose couch thy promise holds thee bound ;
But in the rapturous twilight thou shalt come
(For thou shalt have the power) to seek me here ;
Here, like a star that watches all alone
The happy dawn move up its glimmering stair,
Will I await thy coming ; thou shalt see,
Unveiled, my radiant beauty, which can make
The night more clear than earth's sublimest noon ;
And when the course of haply three-score years
Shall dim the eyes, shall mark the faded cheek,
Shall chill the breast of thy now matchless bride,
Yet shalt thou still, in longer youth preserved
By frequent clasp of these immortal arms,
Find here, unchanged, the glorious banquet spread
To which my heart, with words of embassy,
Now bids thee welcome ! O be kind, be wise,
And grasp the good that waits but for thy will.

CEPHALUS.

In vain thy words are spent ; yet think not, goddess,
That 'tis the inward censure of my heart
Which thus instructs my tongue. Thou canst not
die,—

Thou canst not know the long-enduring pain
That springs from headstrong pleasure, for thou art
Immortal ; no revenge it works to thee
If day by day thy unrestrained love
Should burn more fiercely than the myriad lights
Which yearly lead the happy bridegroom home.
Such joys we watch far off ; we dare not rise,
Being imperfect, to behold them near,
Lest we thereby should strive to shape our own,—
Should seek to clothe this weak mortality
With everlasting glory, which attempt
Could bring but ruin. Let them then remain
Incomprehensible. But this I know ;—
That ill he reads the secret of that life,

Which, being twain, yet moves to one sweet music,
Who foremost sets the passionate desire
To hold for his peculiar delight
The eyes, the lips, and all the coveted charms,
Which memory or imagination gives
To her who rules the changes of his sleep.
Not thus, belovèd, whom methinks I see
Watching forlorn within the twilight porch,
Not thus for thee my steadfast passion grew.
Perchance I saw thee fair ; yet all in vain
Had been the power of sound, or sight, or touch,
Unless that sweet and most mysterious sense
Of something found which each had long desired,
Had touched our hearts. Then did those outward joys
Become the handmaids of the love within ;
Like beauteous gates of some renownèd shrine,
Which he who passes on to sacrifice
Scarce heeds, or if he heeds them, marvels not
That round that centre all should be so fair.
O goddess ! thou art happy in the calm

Of thine eternal destiny ; but he
Who needs must count the lessening hours to come
By the sad growth of those already past ;—
Who nearly scans his little plot of life,
To cast therein whatever seed he deems
Will bring forth most of pleasure ;—he discerns
No good, no beauty, where he fears no pain.
Victory and hope, defeat and agony,
Then victory once again that soars aloft
As mounts a laden eagle through the cloud,—
From such he learns the grandeur of his being.
Therefore his love disdaineth the pursuit
Of that alone which fadeth ; therefore strives
To curb the cravings of his sensual will ;
And even while he claspseth to his breast
The sweetest thing that breathes, he clasps therewith
An equal gain of fear, and grief, and death,
To make his glory vaster.

EOS.

Canst thou then
Make pain itself the minister of love ?

CEPHALUS.

To love must be to suffer, for the gods
Give but to men the shadow of their bliss,
And interdict its substance. Harken yet;—
I stood alone on fair Ænone's shore
 What time the sun rose clear above the crest
Of blue Hymettus ; like a marble floor
 Stretched out the widening gulf, so much at rest
That even the seabirds as they skimmed it o'er
 With scarce-dipped wings made circles on its
breast ;
I wept for joy, while fancy me upbore
 To sit at heavenly feasts, an equal guest;
'The gods,' I said, 'who live for evermore,
 Behold such things, and therefore are they blest.'

And while I spake upheavèd at my feet
The cold, still face of one too early dead;
Whiter than marble, colder than the sleet
Which the rude north-wind shakes about his head;
Her eyes half-closed; her hand half-stretched to greet
The help that came not; all around her spread
Her long light tresses, in their splendour meet
To deck the pillow of an emperor's bed;
The piteous wreck of one so young, so sweet,
That ocean vexed her not; I turned and fled.
So fear doth ever mingle with the joy
Of him whose love hath found a resting-place;
Loving, he fears lest some untimely chance
Should cloud his joy, and, fearing, therefore suffers.
But were it even unfolded to his sense
That light-concealing death, or that worse death
Of separation, should dissolve too soon
The pleasant bond of interchangèd vows,
Still would he love; though fate should pile the
scale

With untold years of solitary grief;
Still would he feel his joy outweigh them all,
And in the memory of his love live on,
The calm survivor of a thousand storms.
How canst thou hope then, goddess, to supplant
My equal love with any love of thine ?
Thy soul blends not with mine; and though per-
chance
Within the heavenly compass of thine arms
Dwell all delights which youth might most desire ;
Yet worthless such enchantment were to me
When I should meet the unsuspecting glance
Of her whose trust no more could call forth mine.
Nor think that they whose equal hearts are linked
In such harmonious union, dread the time,
When, treading softly life's declining slope,
They watch, more near at hand, the end of all.
Youth sees in youth its choice, but age in age ;
And when the course of haply threescore years
Shall dim thine eyes, shall rough thy faded cheek,

Shall chill thy breast, O Procris! now my bride;
Then shall these eyes have grown too dim to mark
How wears thy beauty; then this bounding pulse
Have checked its pace to move in step with thine;
Then shall we sit, like doves whose nest hath been
For many summers in the selfsame bough,
And from the chambers of the past recal,
More oft with looks than cold unequal words,
What joys, what griefs, have passsed above our heads
As they waxed grey together.

Lo! the day

Grows faint already in yon distant west;
The stars begin to brighten overhead,
The mists are denser in the vales beneath;
Seek not, O goddess, longer to delay
My wished return to her whose faithful breast
Grows cold e'en now with oft returning dread
Lest these long hours have seen her bridegroom's
death.

EOS.

Thou shalt return; yet think not that for him
Who spurns the mandate of celestial love
The earth reserves her blessing. Thou hast set
Thy boastful constancy above the feast
Of deathless joys to which I bade thee welcome;
And what my loss to thee it matters not.
But think what pain, what wasting jealousy
That burns and yet consumes not, thou shalt know,
When thou shalt find that she, for whose loved sake
Thy free desires have held themselves enchained,
Prefers the sparkle of a stranger's gifts
To chaste renown, or thy too trustful honor.

II.

The porch of the house of CEPHALUS; time, the last moments of twilight.

PROCRIS (*alone*).

Slow fades the light; the last red sunset bars
Still rest awhile against the purple slope
Of dark Cithaeron; but his sacred head
Is lost already mid the emerald shades
That spread their pure soft curtain to divide
The realms of light and darkness. All is still,
Save for the shouts of hunters late returning,
Or the hoarse baying of the hounds that bid
Their wearied comrades welcome; these are sounds
Borne hither from the shadowy emptiness
That fills the outline of the westward hills.

E

And lo ! far off a ruddy gleam betrays
The sudden kindling of a torch ; it moves
As moves the joyful bearer to his door ;
Another follows slowly ;—now the first
Is quenched in darkness ;—now the twain are gone.
And now, perchance, bright flaming from the wall
Of some contented home, they watch the feast
That bids the hunter think not of his toil ;
They see the happy matron moving round
To fill the cup for him who pledges her
With the sweet guerdon of a husband's kiss ;
Or for that guest who shared the perilous chase,
And now shall share the shelter of his dwelling.
Or else they see (ah ! happiest sight of all !)
The soft-limbed first-born, who hath hardly learnt
To make sweet answer to his father's voice,
Brought from his yielding slumber, to receive
The gentle praise that flows from kindred tongues.
But where art thou, who shouldst be unto me
The living surety of a like content ?

Where hast thou been, since, waking with the dawn,
To thee I stretched my arms, and found thee not ?
Ah ! could some power but lead unto thine ear
The many sighs, each one a separate prayer,
Which from my lips this day have wandered forth
In fruitless search of thee, thou wouldest not tarry.
I sent them forth ; but ever came they back
From rock or grove, or from the echoing vault
Of silent noon, and spake, ' He is not here ; '
And when the cooler eventide brought home
The flocks to fold and birds to well-known nests,
Still came that answer back, ' He is not here.'
Where art thou then ? for yet my love disdains
To credit thoughts which doubt would fain inspire ;
I may not dream that thou wouldest thus forsake me,
Without a sign whereby my heart might fix
A limit to its hours of loneliness.
'Tis some mischance that holds thee ; ah ! but what ?
For not alone with crags and rushing streams,
With wasting heat, or with the angry thrust

Of wounded quarry turned at last to bay ;
Not with such enemies alone he wars
Who seeks his pleasure in the frequent chase ;
But he must dread the pitiless revenge
Of those earth-wandering citizens of heaven
The rude invasion of whose sylvan haunts
Brings either death, or that worse agony
Of life prolonged in reasonless despair ;
These things I fear ; O then return, return !

Methought I heard a step ; and lo ! the dusk
Is yonder crossed by some yet shadowy form
That gathers shape from the surrounding void
As it moves hither. Leap not wildly, heart ;
It is not he ; for neither did I hear
His distant shout of greeting, nor, as now
It parts the curtain of the twilight haze,
Can I discern the bearing which so oft,
In those strange times when I was yet unwed,
With sudden chills and struggling breath surprised me,

While yet my sisters questioned who drew nigh.
Nay, 'tis not he; yet are his features noble;
Perchance (ah! thought that hangs 'twixt hope and
fear!)

He brings to me some tidings. Welcome, stranger;
What seek'st thou hitherward?

CEPHALUS (*disguised*).

Far off I saw,
While yet my steps, unto these vales unused,
Held on their way with much uncertainty,
The light that fills thy portal, streaming faint
Across the gathering darkness. 'Thither turn,'
My heart cried out (poor heart! that knew not then
What beauty thus its hiding place betrayed!),
'And thou shalt there have tidings where he dwells,
The prince of friends, much-honoured Cephalus.'

PROCRIS.

Alas! thou comest where he now should be,
But where he is not. Hence, ere yet the morn

Had waked the world with her returning fire,
Ere yet mine eyes had cast away their sleep,
He went, I know not whither. Hast thou not
Some tidings for me, stranger? Art thou not
One whose fleet footsteps oft have matched with
his,

What time the day hath roused itself to hear
The bay of hounds and answering shouts of men
Ring far across dim valleys, where the stag
Sniffed up the misty fragrance of the east?
Ah! vain are then those fond imaginings
Which made thee, while I watched thee still draw
nigh,

The long desired and joy-crowned messenger
Whose welcome voice should bid me doubt no
more!

Yet tell me wherefore thou dost seek for him?
My present grief shall not prevent my duty;
Though he be absent, yet am I his wife.

CEPHALUS.

Art thou then Procris ? fear not for thy lord.
Yet let me speak (if words can speak) the joy
That holds me in thy presence. Yea, they said,
' Procris is fairest of a thousand brides ;'
But still my speech denied it, for methought
That I had looked on everything most fair
Within the bounds of god-blest Attica,
Or in the dark green islands of the dawn.
But now mine eyes behold thee, O far more
Dost thou surpass the sweetness of thy fame,
Than doth the argent of the moon surpass
Her rounded image in some sleepy pool.
Was not thy father kindred with the gods ?
And lo ! thy face is radiant with a glow
Which dwells but with immortals : well they said
That thou wert fairest of the earth's fair daughters ;
For as the might and beauty of the gods
By far exceeds the goodliness of men,

By far exceeds their glory, so dost thou,
Being a goddess, reign unrivalled queen
O'er all things born and all that yet shall be.
O let me worship thee ! Yet wherefore weep ?
Hast thou seen aught of evil in my words ?

PROCRIS.

Thy words ? I marked them not ; ah me ! forgive
This joy that melts the hardness of despair !
For as the warrior plants his footsteps well
To stand the shock of battle ; as he strains
His knotted arms, and tighter grasps his spear ;
So doth the long expectancy of woe
Grow firm against its coming ; suffering not
The tear that weakens or the doubt that slays.
But let the dread pass by, let joy return
Upon the wings of such a word as thine,
And, like to one o'erbalanced by the strength
That struck at nothing, so endurance falls,
Thrown by itself, which nought beside could vanquish.

‘Fear not,’ thou sayest; ah then! by these thick
tears,

True witness of my soul’s unaltering love,
Tell me where rests he; wherefore comes he not;
If all alone; if far, or where my steps
Can reach him, weary with his solitude;
I fear not darkness, stranger; let us hence.

CEPHALUS.

Nay, then, be comforted; not all alone
He rests this night, unhurt and uncomplaining,
But with the chase outwearied; thus it fell:—
About the time, perchance, when first thine arms
Found out thy side forsaken, on the slope
Of sweet Hymettus, whose rekindling top
Eastward to Ceos first proclaims the day,
I met thy lord, much-honoured Cephalus;
His spear laid down beside him, while he stood,
Watched by the bright eyes of a favoured hound,
Tightening the stakes and many folded nets

Which are his chiefest pleasure. Long we spake,
For we were friends of old ; meantime the brace
Which at my heels are alway wont to linger,
Waxing impatient, stole away unseen,
Tracing swift circles o'er the scented heath.
I missed them not until we heard far off
The deep-mouthed ecstacy of hounds that find
An unexpected quarry ; from our side
With one loud answer bounded fast away
Thy lord's tried veteran, like a bolt that flies
From the sharp string of virgin Artemis ;
And while we gazed, as men but newly waked,
Lo ! like a vision rising from the earth,
A peerless stag rose upward from the vale ;
His eyes like fire, and from his urgent heels
The loose stones scattering like the hail that falls,
When dark-robed thunder sits on all the hills.
Onward he came, and breathlessly we stood
To watch him fall, entangled ; but behold !
(O 'twas a sight to make the gods rejoice !)

With one short cry he rose—he rose, and cleared
The net that held his ruin, and was gone
Swift as the stooping shadow of a cloud.
Did we not follow? did we not speed on
With leap and shout and javelins snatched up,
Cheering the dogs that came up from behind,
And passed us, toiling forward? O the earth
Flew up to meet us! O the cold fresh air
That sweeps the mist from dew-crowned pinnacles
Sang in our ears such wild strange melodies
That other sound we heard not! Northward still
Past crag and stream and bittern-haunted pool
We followed side by side; and evermore
Beheld the chase still farther, as it swept
Across the front of some green shouldered hill.

Art thou impatient? Let me to the end;
Methinks the sun had but an hour to climb
When we stopped breathless; for a while we lay,
When to our feet came back the wearied hounds—

My twain, but his returned not. Then he spake,—
‘ O friend, this day were marked a day of sorrow,
What though I found thee, if my dog were lost ;
Let us go hence and seek him where we may.’
So went we forward, searching many hours,
Yet found him not.

PROCRIS.

The dog returned ere noon,
And seemed not weary, though with piteous whine
And eyes that looked for comfort, he made strong
The fear which then began to fill my bosom ;
But let me hear thee.

CEPHALUS.

Wearily we strayed,
And now the day was halfway to the west,
When, as we tracked a clearly running stream
That changed from pool to fall, from fall to pool,
We came to where it noisily underran

An arch of rock, whose fringe of pendant flowers
Half screened a pool through whose deceitful depth
The golden sand looked upward to the roof
Of slender birch boughs shutting out the sky.
We turned to take possession, blessing it ;
When lo ! much sweeter than the pairing note
Of birds in springtime, from the farther verge
Came such faint cries of innocent alarm
As speak a maiden startled ; and we saw
The sudden rout of soft Boeotian nymphs,
Scared from their sylvan bath. Yet one remained,
And for a moment turned on us her glance
Full of mute fear and questioning surprise ;
A sunbeam round her head, her azure robe
Caught with both hands above her heaving bosom
And dropping to her feet ; then too she fled,
Her white limbs shining through the yielding brake
That closed again behind her. There we cooled
The heats of chase ; and thither soon returned
The virgin train with many a wondering youth

To bid us welcome, deeming us, perchance,
Sprung from a race that mixes not with earth.
Much mirth we made; yet when the hour drew nigh
That warned us to be gone, thy husband's brow
Grew dull with weariness; 'O friend,' he said,
I may not tread the backward path this night;
Yet thou shalt go and bear to whom I love
My word of love, and in my room shalt share
All that is mine; perchance there dwelleth here
Some good to make amends.' With that he cast
A smile to one whose answering cheek gave forth
Love's scarlet token; then I took farewell,
And ere I well was gone, methought he slept.

PROCRIS.

Alas! was he so weary? Cease, my heart,
To long for that which thou may'st not possess;
Thy lord returns not; not to-night shalt thou
Vary thy throbbing as his own doth change.
But thou art welcome, stranger; fear thou not

That from my hands thou freely shalt receive
All that a wife may blamelessly bestow.

CEPHALUS.

How burns the beacon of a good report !
Not like those vague and unsubstantial fires
Which mock the foot that follows, leading on
To miry pool and treacherous standing place ;
But, seen far off, it brightens as we near it,
Filling the night with splendour. Thine it is
This to show forth with glory unsurpassed ;
Yet would I learn—and blamelessly to thee,
Being thus blameless, may the word be spoken—
What firmest anchor holds the bark secure
Of wedded faithfulness ? What doth she dread,
Who, left forlorn through absence of her lord,
Yet still, despite of importunity,
Keeps clear for him the fountain of her love ?
Fears she the gods ? Their hand should rather punish
The chaste and not the wanton ; for with men

The highest peak to which ambition's hand
Points upward, is resemblance to the gods
In might and majesty ; and should they not
Be wise to imitate their mingled loves ?
Or doth she dread the quick revenging wrath
Of him whose right she granteth to another ?
Lo ! if she speak not, never shall his sense
Grow keen to scent the action ; and to her
The fault not known is not a fault committed.
For fault, meseems, doth only live through blame ;
Blame, like a mirror, to its eye presents
Its own true likeness ; but let blame be gone,
And all the fault doth vanish ; then shall deeds
Work out the secret promptings of desire,
And, undetected, say ' There is no sin.'
These things perplex me, Procris ; for mine eye,
(Let me confess it) hath but lately marked
A maiden of my kindred, whom to hold
In the sweet bonds of wedded faithfulness
Is my desire ; yet rash the venture seems

If such be all the surety that her love
Will bind itself to me, as mine to her.
Hast thou some wisdom to enlighten me?

PROCRIS.

Lo! surely now thou dost not truly love!
For love hath habitation in a clime
More hot than all the deserts of the south,
Where dwells no doubt, where question alway dies
Beneath the light which seemeth alway noon.
Yet to thy peace my words shall minister,
If any words can illustrate aright
That sacred power which holds the heart more fixed
Than all the cycling changes of the stars.
Ill hast thou read—so ill that my compassion
For this thy blindness, only doth assuage
The wrath that rose within me at thy speech—
Ill hast thou read the secret of that life,
Which, being twain, yet moves to one sweet music,
As thus to think that any shade of fear,

Or chance of blame, is needed to compel
The utmost of a wife's fidelity ;—
Love joineth souls, but fear doth rend apart.
O my best lord, O tarrying Cephalus !
Did I but think such bondage might supplant
The glorious freedom of my love for thee,
Then would I seek, before the morn returns,
Before my arms could mock thee once again
With traitorous joy, some cliff that fronts the sea ;
There would I lay my wedding garments by,
And make one leap to death ; for happier far
That thou should'st mourn me faithful, than that I
Should live to curse thee with dissembling love.
Smilest thou, stranger, at my vehement words ?
Yea, haply little wisdom is for women ;
But the same power which made their sense less keen
To them hath given the argument of deeds,
That builds not step by step, but with one bound
Moves from the faint beginning to the end.
O let my words assure thee ! Cast away

The doubts that hold thee from thy heart's desire ;
And let not jealousy abuse thine eyes,
For beauty wed is like a gathered flower,
Which all men may behold, yet plucked by one.

CEPHALUS.

Yea, one doth pluck, but many smell thereto ;
Not for himself he plucks it, though for him
Hath been the dread and prick of vengeful thorns ;
The very winds embrace it wantonly ;
And while he deems that for his sole delight
The petals blush, the perfume spreads its toils,
A thousand else, in secrecy secure,
Are feeding on its beauty. Thus it fares
(Believe it, Procris, I deceive thee not)
With more than tongue could number, whose chaste
wives
Step through the gate of love's solemnities
As those who turn to revelry from fast.
Nay, look not strangely on me; thou art not,

Though blameless yet, of nature so distinct
 That to thy heart thou canst not well portray
 What rebel passions have the power to turn
 The soul against its own pure citadel.
 Tell me, if one should find thee here alone,
 Thy lord far off amid Bœotian vales—
 Should clasp thy arms with circlets such as these,
 With pearls should clothe thy bosom ; on thy lips
 Print such warm kisses as my lips bestow,
 And bid thee sell thine honour—that vain word !—
 For stores of wealth more vast than thought can com-
 pass ;—

Would'st thou deny him ? Would'st thou turn away,
 As now thou dost, to reach a sword to slay him,
 Or to conceal the dayspring of that love
 Which rises up within thee ? Speak, O speak !

PROCRIS.

Alas, alas ! who art thou ? who am I ?
 Am I the wife of him whose bridal hour,

One short month past, resounded with the songs
Which made our names a blessing ? Said they not
' The gods make all like Cephalus and thee ?'
And who art thou ? I dare not see thy face,
Lest it should turn avenging glances on me,
And chill my flesh to marble ; only this—
This—this is plain before me—that to thee,
And not to him whom custom calls my lord,
My heart is plighted. Was it long ago
That last we met ? I know not ; clasp me now,
And let me take revenge for all the times
Wherein I drooped without thee ; let my tears
Wash out their hard remembrance, wash away
All other thoughts save that I lost thee once,
And now have found thee, O my love ! my love !

CEPHALUS (*disclosing himself*).

Alas ! look up, and then look down for ever !

O ye faint lights ! O stars that evermore

Do crown the head of crime-beholding night,
Hear ye my words ; I speak not to the gods,
For they are joined in fellowship to mock
The endless toil of mortals ; but to you,
That seem, by times unchanged through many years,
To have some gift of beauteous constancy,
Will I pour forth the curse that shall not change
Till women cease to value more than fame
The tinsel gifts of gold and flattery.
Hear ye my words, and whensoe'er ye watch
The dancing lights of bridal, whensoe'er
The dusk grows tremulous with warbled hymns,
Then think my curse is on them ; then put forth
The binding power which is your heritage,
And seize the bridegroom's heart with such a storm
Of fierce mistrust and tossing jealousy,
That he shall bar the very light of heaven
From her false face, to whom, when left unguarded,
He will not trust the keeping of his honour ;
So, not confiding, he shall not sustain

The wound whose scar will mark me unto death.
Death, death ! what art thou ? Am I not now dead ?
What now are all the hand-in-hand delights
That circle life with beauty ? What the peace
Whose smile was wont to greet me when I came
From weary fields of labour ? What the love
Of all things great, and excellent, and glorious ?
O ashes, ashes ! Bury them, my soul,
Beneath thy stirred up anger ! And shalt thou,
O perjured woman, these being dead, live on ?
Lo ! thine own tongue hath doomed thee unto ruin !
But thy death-couch shall not be where the deep
Rolls round the sacred shore ; thou shalt not mix
Thy tainted life with aught so pure and kind ;
But even here, where thou hast lied so basely.
In thought, and word, and action, shall thy blood
Flow forth in sacrifice ; for happier far
That thou should'st die with this one fault upon thee,
(If it be only one) than live to curse
The world, with vengeance tempted by thy sin.

Dost thou not speak ? Dost thou not kneel for mercy ?
Thy face is hid, but even through thy hands
I see the tears come thickly ; dost thou think
That these can cleanse thy soul, can bring thee back
The outraged garment of thy purity ?
Or that the thought arrested ere the deed
Doth leave no black defilement ? Think not so ;
It is the will, it is the will, that makes
The guilt of trespass ; O less tainted far
Is he that sins in action, he that tastes
The bitter dregs of lust's deluding cup,
Than one who, foiled in opportunity,
Mourneth the pleasures of his void intent.
Thou shalt not do so ; yet my hand shall spare thee,
For some short space, until the passionless night
Hath been my counsellor ; before her seat
Will I unfold my purpose, and her voice,
Not mine, O faithless, shall direct the end.

III.

*A woodland scene in Attica. PROCRIS in the disguise
of a hunter.*

CEPHALUS.

This then our compact;—equally to share,
While thrice the moon her pilgrimage fulfils,
Whatever dangers compass the pursuit
Of those branch-headed herds of Artemis
To which this morn thy still unerring shaft
Hath been a terror; equally to share
Whatever joys are native to the spot,
(Whether within the portals of my lodge,
Or in the silent forest,) where fatigue
Forgets itself in beautiful discourse,

Or in the wells of slumber ; equally
What dreams, what whispers from the world unseen
Each hears or sees in solitude apart.
So shall our better natures, nourished up
By emulation and forbearing love,
Cast out all baseness which is swift to creep
Into the life of him that dwells alone.
What waits us in the future ;—whether still,
The term of compact over, we shall hold
The chiefest place within each other's hearts,
The gods best know ; yet, youth, of this be sure,
That on my part shall lack no diligence
To fill thy mouth with words of good report
When hence thou goest to sojourn with thine own.
And for myself, though sprung from such a stock
As well might claim a birthright to excel ;
Though in the arts of hunting or of war
By far thy master, though in years more grown ;
Yet do I feel that thy companionship
To me will prove as fruitful in content
As mine to thee in deeds of hardihood.

But tell me now, hath this thy javelin,
Whose gift, methinks, doth more than compensate
The slowness of thy yet untutored limbs,
Hath it alway such virtue? swerves it not,
No matter what the quarry, whose the aim?

PROCRIS.

It will not swerve; 'tis said that Artemis
Upon some daughter of my father's race
Bestowed it once, when, by a lawless rout
That dared the fortress of her chastity,
She stood surprised; it came unto her hand,
And, as each threatening savage fell transfixed,
Still to her hand obsequious it returned,
Till all were slain.

CEPHALUS.

A deadly shaft indeed!

PROCRIS.

Ah me! too deadly; for at times I dread
Lest spiteful chance enlist it, to perform

Some cruel hurt between deluded friends.
Darkness might make an enemy of thee ;
Or, rustling through the forest leafage, I
Might seem to thee a wild and ravenous beast
Approaching to thy harm ; so thou should'st strike,
And find me, dead.

CEPHALUS.

Why dost thou tremble thus,
Why thus turn pale, like to some foolish girl
Escaping from her shadow ? 'Tis not well ;
Shall I thus soon, by virtue of my love,
Reprove what in thee seems unlovely, youth ?
Let weaker minds, let women ('tis their right)
Look forward to the danger which doth wait
On goodly enterprise ; let such foretell,
Unto each other, all the deaths they fear
For those to whom that very fear secures
A softer, warmer welcome when they come
From fields where expectation, like a sun,
Blindeth their eyes to all things but itself.

PROCRIS.

It was unmanly in me ; but I felt,
Even as I spake, a sudden faint and chill,
As if the very weapon of our speech
Were quivering in my breast, and all my life
Were swiftly oozing through the cruel door
By which it entered. Blame me not for this ;
'Twas not my will that sinned, and I have heard
That sudden slips or shrinkings of the flesh,
Which, being such, it cannot but inherit,
Are not the index of a worthless nature ;
But that the soul may suffer much defeat,
And yet maintain its greatness unimpaired.

CEPHALUS.

Who taught thee thus ?

PROCRIS.

'Tis but an idle fancy,—
I know not whence I plucked it ; like a child

That robs the brooklet of its listening flowers,
My wont hath been to gather heedlessly,
Not reckoning up their value, wilding thoughts ;
And some, perchance, I dropped as soon as gathered ;
And some, perchance, have woven in a wreath
To crown the idleness of summer dreams ;
And some, though crushed and withered, I have kept,
Until they seemed to grow a part of me :
But if thou bid me, I will cast them down.

CEPHALUS.

I will not bid thee ; 'tis a thing most strange,
And most prophetic of our lasting love,
That in thy careless speech (if such it be),
Thou touchest what hath been the central star
Round which my thoughts, for now two weary months,
Have slowly circled, not the less by day,
Than nightly ; for my noontide for so long
Hath suffered such a horrible eclipse
That light and darkness blindly overstep

Their proper boundaries, mingling into one.
And were it not that I had dimly seen,
In last night's visions, glimpses of redress,
Not even to thee should I declare the tale,
Which, being told, in some sort shall confirm
The thought thou deemest idle. Now 'tis noon ;
The silence teaches me ; thou canst not hear
Aught save the cricket, with his bounding chirp
Making the heat more sultry ; or the sound
Of Dryads whispering softly mid the leaves
Their never-comprehended tales of love :
Therefore an hour may well be charmed away
In this relation ; tell me, gentle youth,
Ere I begin, if ever grief hath touched thee ?

PROCRIS.

I cannot tell ; at times I have a grief,
And then again it seemeth none of mine,
But like the shadow of another's woe,
Which I must feel and weep for ; tell me thine ;

And cease not if my face be turned away,
Or if I play with grasses, heed it not ;
For oft misfortune hath a sudden power
To move me, and thou must not see my tears.

CEPHALUS.

Fear not ; it is the soul's nobility
That makes a way for sympathetic tears,
As much as meanness is the certain spring
Of those which mourn the coward's own mishap ;
So strangely life is tempered, that a deed
Is vile or great, according to the thought
From which it grows ; this shall I show thee soon.
But O, my bride, my wife, where'er thou art,—
Whether a lonely wanderer mid the rocks
Whose cruel hardness often shall recal
The hardness of my anger ; whether now
A trembling captive in the ruthless hands
Of men that know not life's humanity,—
Or whether (thought too bitter !) thou art passed
Beyond the touch of mortals, leaving only

A few dull ashes to the mourning earth
Which once thy beauty made supremely glad ;—
O would that thou, in place of all beside,
Could'st hear my strange confession ! would that thou
Wert here to feel the passionate embrace,
Which, if thou livest, shall recast the time
When we came newly to each other's arms,
And climbing stars made musical the night
Till dawn came up behind them, with the sound
Of welcome to the morning of our love.

For only thrice the changing moon hath grown
From faint to rounded splendour, only thrice
Hath crowned the forehead of the midnight south,
Since I to Procris, fairest maid of all
Whose beauty shines from god-blest Attica,
Gave confirmation of a love begun
In such a sweet, pure-hearted constancy,
That haply thus the envy of the gods
Was moved to work it evil, deeming us

Too far removed above the common fate
Which gives to none contentment unimpaired.
If this the cause I know not, nor desire
To know what in me tempted the pursuit
Of her whose love hath well-nigh proved too cruel,—
Her, the bright goddess of the orient day,
Whose golden tresses thou mayst oft have seen
Flooding the east with glory. Marvel not ;
'Twas in the first flush of a burning day
That I had left my threshold, left my bride
Still cradled in the happy thoughts of sleep,
And sought the ridge from which I lately warned
Thy heedless footsteps. There unwatched I stood,
Save by the glances of a faithful hound,
Tightening the stakes and many-folded nets
Which since that hour have been unvisited ;
When all around me spread an amber cloud,
Not light, nor dark, but softly luminous,
And lo ! the earth sank down, and I was left
To drift I knew not whither, borne along

By winds that still seemed struggling into speech,
Yet still dispersed in wordless cadences,
Feeding my soul with undefined delight.
Then all was lost in blank forgetfulness ;
And when I waked, which was not till the night
Had set her first watch in the camps of heaven,
I looked upon a face that stooped above me,—
A face most beautiful, yet pitiless ;—
The face of one, who, being of the gods,
Feels but the joy of loving, not the pain,—
That pain which is the seal of brotherhood
For all things touched with earth's infirmity.

* * * * * *

Thus far upon the melancholy tide
Of all my sorrows I have borne thee, youth ;
Thus far have words been equal to declare
What changing agonies of doubt and love
Disturbed my spirit, while, perforce disguised,
I tried the edge of each of those keen blades
Wherewith the goddess cursed me,—flattery,

Then jealousy, then, subtlest of them all,
The poisoned steel of false philosophy,—
Upon the armour of her faultless will
Whom I had boasted sweeter than divine.
But not until the infinite abyss
Of earth's untraversed ocean hath been spanned,
And all its waters measured, drop by drop,
Shall any words be found to comprehend
The pain of that one moment when she turned
And cast herself upon me, like a wave
That casts itself upon the amorous shore,
And in contented murmurings dies away.
Methought in that one moment I could see
A finger pointed at me from the sky,
Marking me out for scorn, that I could hear
The cruel laughter of the watching gods ;
And in my pain I cursed the loves of men ;
And in my wrath I bared this shrinking blade
To slay the thing which had so wounded me
And then in doubt or pity I forbore,

And rushed into the cooling deeps of night,
Like one who plunges headlong in the flood
To shun the jaws of fire, and, there upheld,
He scarce knows how, floats blindly, till his foot
Strikes on some jutting rock, that wakens him
To view the ashes of his outraged home.
So after many hours I found again
My outraged hearth, but found it desolate,
For Procris found I not,—for joy was gone,
And all was gone which made life beautiful.

Not much remains ; like some whose straining bark
Hath long been tossed beneath a lightless heaven,—
A firmament of terror, only changed
From black to grey as midnight yields to noon ;—
Who, casting forth in eagerness a line,
Have found the fathoms underneath their keel
Still lessening toward an unknown continent,
And know not yet if rescue waits them there,
Or horrors of inevitable wreck ;

So deem I now that to a certain end
My tribulation speedily draws nigh ;
And though what end, I know not, yet doth hope
Shine in the ascendant, overmatching dread.

For while last night, as far too oft hath been
The occupation of those sleepless hours,
I counted all my griefs, and weighed once more
The utter strangeness of each past event,
A yearning came upon me, a desire
To search their deeper mysteries, and find
My Procris guiltless, even at the cost
Of tenfold desolation unto me.
And as I groaned for very helplessness,
The dark grew light, and one was standing there,
O youth ! more godlike, manlike, than the soul
Hath yet had power most faintly to portray ;
His face all might, and yet within his eyes
A deeper, softer fire than ever dwelt
Within the orbs of watching matronhood.

A conqueror ; for round his head was twined
A wreath whose foliage was not of the leaf,
But tongues of light that mingled each with each,
And made a glory like the golden ring
That hangs a warning round some wandering star
When the late Autumn waxes big with storm.

A conqueror, most surely ; yet not one
Who in his victory hath beheld the wreck
Of youth and life, or heard the cries of men
Slain in the bloody closes of the fight ;
But one (if such could be) that hath prevailed
O'er force by gentleness, o'er wrong by love.

Methought he questioned me ; and all my grief,
Like melting clouds which may not cross the sun,
Grew lighter in the telling : then he spake ;—
Life and dominion in his utterance dwelt,
For not the dead, for not the raging deep
Could hear him speak, and still remain unmoved.

Like the full sound of rivers flushed with rain
His words streamed on, discoursing many things ;

And though, like floods, their strength hath passed
me by,
Veiled in a mist of merged remembrances,
One thing remains, a bright unvalued jewel,
And I will wear it till, my wife, with thee
I change it for the calm, unfearful trust
Which yet once more shall make our lives divine !
O friend, she was too guiltless ; not to me
Should such a pearl of faultless excellence
Have been committed ;—not to me, whose sense
Denied its years of schooling, and condemned,
Upon the shadow of a baseless tale,
Her whose deserving, challenged to the proof,
Would charge the heavens with lapsing constancy !
For this I know, that in my touch she knew me ;—
Even yet before her outward sight could pierce
The thick disguise that mocked my struggling will,
Her inward self had warning from her lips
To lift the sign of welcome ; then she fell
Upon my breast and I rejected her,—

Rejected her, rejected all my life.
And now I wait, unto what end I know not ;
To-day hath risen with better hopefulness,
And that most wondrous vision, I may think,
Came not to mock me with a joy withheld.

PROCRIS.

O break ! O break ! deep cistern of my tears ;
Break, break, but not for anguish ! Turn to me,
O Cephalus, O husband, turn to me !
Is this disguise more hard to pierce than thine ?
Hath this embrace no message for thy heart ?
O yet again, and yet again my lips
Shall call for entrance, as did thine to me,
Until thou answer ; then will I return
Unto the broken banquet of our loves.
Ah ! no, not broken ; for a short two months,
Which soon shall only seem a short two hours,
Have we been sleeping, husband, and have dreamed
Of powers that sought to part us each from each ;

So fond we were, to dream that those who dwell
In bright unfading glory, envied us
Our little portion of unstable joy !
But I have waked and found thee near me still,
And ten times sweeter for the fancied ill
Is now thy presence and my soul's content.

CEPHALUS.

Yea, ten times sweeter ? Could my lips invent
New forms of speech a thousandfold more strong
Than such as yet have served us to prolong
The lagging noon within these silent bowers,
They could not image such a peace as ours.
Here let us linger, feeding silently
Upon the knowledge of each other's love,
Until through yonder westward grove we see
The day's last splendour ; till the arch above
Grows darker round some silver pointed star
That brightens through the wind-tossed foliage,
Like a faint signal seen across the bar

By those returned from storm-vexed pilgrimage ;
Who now have furled the last neglected sail,
And now have left the last laborious oar,
And now give back the landsmen's joyous hail
As grates their keel upon the clasping shore ;
And now forget all overpast alarms
Each in the shelter of his loved-one's arms.

SONGS OF THE SPIRIT.

HIEROGLYPHICS.

NOT only kingdoms, dynasties, and powers,
Whose name was something on the youthful earth
When Time made less of unproductive hours
Than now of moments—moments giving birth
To thoughts outnumbering all which passed him by
Who traced new sheepfolds in the Syrian sky ;

Not only these have left, before they fled
Into the tombs of all forgetfulness,
Recording sculptures, arduous to be read
By even those who boast that they possess
A right by lineage plainly to discern
What others fain through slow research would learn.

Once I beheld—perchance 'twas in a dream,
So distant seems that once, so faint, so strange,—
A marble cliff, just crimson with the gleam
Of daylight sunk beyond a darkening range;
A marble cliff, snow-white, without a scar,
Crowned with the burning of a silver star.

And underneath that fair projection lay
Twin lakes, unroughed by any wandering gale,
Whose tranquil bosom glорied to display
A depth of blue that made the sky seem pale;
And round their brink in undulations spread
Meadows more soft than thought hath visited.

Again I saw it, after years had gone,—
A million years they might be to the soul,
Yet to the body counting but as one,—
Again, but then no more serene and whole;
Strange lines across its purity were traced,
And half its glories evermore defaced.

O tell me, thou whose pureness charmed me, thou
Whose life was sweet with ever fresh surprise,
What grief is this which sits upon thy brow,
What furrows these which cluster round thine eyes ?
I cannot read them, yet must they express
The plaintive tale of some most deep distress.

Lo ! I remember how in ages gone
My thoughts besieged thee, how they strove to climb
Each wall that gives protection to the throne
Whereon thy spirit sits in state sublime ;
Unheeding then, in self-defeating haste,
How many fields of pleasure laid they waste.

Is it the tale of that unworthy strife
Which thus confronts me ? Is it thus, that I
Have left an impress on thine inward life
Which will not leave it though the outward die ?
Or lies it yet within my power to heal
The scars which seem my condemnation's seal ?

I call, but find no answer ; I must wait
Till Time breaks down the frontier which divides
Thy soul from mine, and crowns one potentate
Above the thoughts that warred on adverse sides ;
And haply then we shall not care to see
How great my fault, how real thy victory.

DIVIDED.

THOU art not dead ; perchance the tree yet grows,
Dropping its shadows on the breezy grass,
Whence shall be hewn a coffer to enclose
Each creeping change through which thy frame
shall pass ;
Thou art not dead ; thy spirit hath not crossed
The marge of life,—yet unto me how lost !

There is a river whose polluted stream
Makes sad the silent palaces of woe ;
That glides, unheard, beneath the fevered gleam
Of fitful torches tossing to and fro ;
And wheresoe'er its sluggard courses wind,
Mirth goes before and cursing comes behind.

Upon one side thou standest, I on mine;
Yet 'tis no space that holds us thus apart;
To-day we met, the world could not divine,
When hand touched hand, how far was heart from
heart;

Would that the gulf which severs pole from pole
Divided sense, if soul might speak with soul.

Behold! I sojourn in Egyptian night
Wherein can no man labour, but to thee
Late evening brings fresh revenues of light,
Folding thy flocks of stainless fantasy;
And oft at midnight comes an angel by
With feet that move to some soft harmony.

O spotless one! when I shall wake to gaze
On all the sins which part me now from thee,
To taste the fruit of unconsidered days,
To see the shrine of slaughtered purity
Scattered with broken fragments of the feast
Which lust held there till even life had ceased ;—

When I shall stand with silent lips asunder,
And limbs that slowly stiffen into stone,
With heart that faints, yet lives, and dares not wonder
That all the guilt which frights it is its own ;
When grief too late shall thirst for cooling tears,
And each short moment seem an age of years ;—

O shall I then, from some unmeasured height,
Hear thy life's carol floating faintly down,
And catch a fainter sparkle of the light
That ever shines about thy good deeds' crown,
And feel e'en then a sharper torment thrust
Into the wounds which soul received from dust ?

Or wilt thou come, as I have seen thee come,
A lamp amid the deep caves of despair,
And beckon forth from lips in anguish dumb
A gathering shout of unrestrainèd prayer ;
And through the space that feels a dawning fire
Float on before us, higher yet and higher ;

Till, seeming nearer, yet before us still,
Mingling thy chant more certainly with ours,
We touch the foot of that most holy hill
Whose breadth we know not, whose encrowning
towers,
If such there be, are lifted up sublime
On steeps of light beyond all clouds of Time.

TOGETHER.

LANDS, seas, and winds between us ;—winds that
Across the breadth of such unbounded seas
That wreck may toss above the resting-place
Of some doomed keel, unmarked for centuries
Deserts whereon the low sun never drew
The long stretched shadows of a wayworn crew.

Yea, more than deserts, more than lonely waves,
More than the trackless chambers of the light ;
The tyrant rule to which our frames are slaves,
Which fain would ask for speech, or touch, or s-
Before our souls can journey, hand in hand,
Through memory's courts as through a brea-
land.

Yet are we oft together ;—we have met
Upon the flights of faith's ethereal stair,
Whereby worn spirits rise above the fret
Which to the faithless seems the end of care ;
Where to their gaze Time's mysteries are brought,—
Shadows of action, living forms of thought.

There have we met and watched the world go by—
The world that sees not, fears not, where it treads ;
There have we met, and joinèd oft a sigh
To mark the vastness bending o'er our heads ;
To mark how small the clearest soul's ascent
Above the house of its imprisonment.

There still we meet ; yet not by each is seen
The other soul's more infinite abyss ;
Passion and Pain for ever step between,
Like some too wisely envious of the kiss
By startled lovers all too quickly given
Beneath the stillness of a starlit heaven.

But Love works out his purpose ;—we shall meet,
O friend whose face I may not yet behold,
Within his light before whose veiled feet
We twain have stooped to grasp his mantle's fold ;
And I shall know thee—know thee for the same—
The grand, true soul whose body bore thy name.

SOUGHT.

O SWEET unknown, whose presence oft hath been
The hovering vision of a sleepless night,
Thy shape discerned, and yet thy face not seen,—
Masked in the changes of a shifting light
That ever seems in act to make thee known,
Yet ever fades and leaves me more alone ;—

Lo ! even now, like some Laconian bride
Who felt the sweetness of her lord's embrace
In secret hours, until the appointed tide
Put open trust in stolen rapture's place—
Until, perchance, a closer bond was wrought
Than dwelt in speech or love's most tender thought ;—

Lo ! even thus in spirit art thou mine,
Though still to us the envious years deny
That we should less unconsciously entwine
Those common dreams of life's great majesty
By which our souls, oft mounting hand in hand,
Have sought the plains of virtue's fatherland.

When shall we meet ? Ah ! doubt not we are one
In their pure sight, who, in the times gone by
Made earth rejoice with noble actions done
Not for the praise of dim posterity,
But for the passionate love that will not rest
While, girt with joy, it sees the world unblest.

O linger not, slow Time ! for this I know,
That all delights which follow fancy's tread,—
The sheltered brooklet's modulating flow,
The nodding bells that shade Titania's bed,
All winds that move beneath Spring-scented skies,
All music wreathed with dreamland melodies ;—

All these, my love, my soul's now fruitful wife,
Are but the types of rapture more profound,
Weak emblems of that ecstacy of life,
Which, like a sea, will lap thee round and round,
When thou shalt leave thy maidenhood divine
And slowly drop thy being into mine.

FOUND.

STAND still awhile, sweet hours, before ye speed
Beyond this strangest landmark of my days,
Stand still awhile, and let me idly feed
On that sweet name where centres all my praise,
On thy sweet face, my crownèd queen and wife,
On each fair promise of our blended life.

Our life, my love, our life ;—but ours how long ?
Count up the years which watched us move as
twain,
And ask thyself if Love can be so strong,
Or Death so weak, that we shall count again
That tale of years, before some darkness rise
To shroud our spirits from each other's eyes ?

Is Love so strong? Nay, then, forgive the doubt;
'Tis but a shadow of the world's great sin
Which grieved experience looks upon without,
And dreams anon may even dwell within;
Better to trust the most deceiving love
Than walk in fear lest ours unfaithful prove.

Is Death so weak? I know not; yet the mind
Hath skill to sound the future ere it come,
To weigh thy life's advantages, and find
That day far off, when, rigid, cold, and dumb,
Thy heavenly lips shall charm the earth no more
With songs that melt the soul's most frozen core.

A long life lies before us;—O my love,
If for ourselves we have inherited
The power to see, the spirit to approve
All beauteous things with which the earth is spread;
Mysterious emblems of that perfect life
Wherein each soul shall find in each a wife;—

O were it wise, my love, or were it kind
To hide our pleasure from the hungry sense
Of all the world, or make the sovereign mind
A vassal in the courts of indolence ?
But from this hour mankind are made our heirs ;
I thine, thou mine—but our joint rapture theirs.

ABSOLUTION.

I

ABSOLUTION.

Is it yet morning, Lucio ? I have slept,--
Slept the first time, I think, for twenty nights,
And scarce can fancy, though it must be so,
That day can thus creep on us unawares ;
Yea, though this rest hath been most merciful,
Yet have I half a mind to grudge the loss
Of all those sweet gradations which prepare
The world for each day's glory ; I have missed
The bird's first answer to its questioning mate,
The wind's first summons to the opening flowers,
Or, as but yesterday, the light that seems
To thread its way between the falling drops,
Making their sound tenfold more musical,.

And lifting it, by changes none can name,
From deepest sorrow to a joy more grand
Than tongue can speak, or any heart conceive.

O friend, more valued as from day to day
A summons felt, not uttered, draws me on
To leave behind the soulless crowds of men,
And feel the weight of individual life,—
Lucio, strange thoughts have been with me this
night,
And I must tell thee of them, though perchance
But little thou wilt comprehend their bearing,
Yet must I speak of them, if but to gain
Some better confirmation of their truth
Than mere reflection gives me; for a thought
Is ever weighed and valued by the words
Whereto 'tis wedded; if the thought be good
Then doth it gather confidence, but if
In aught it lacks, then is its lightness seen;—
So would I test the dream that came to me.

Yet, ere I speak, turn outward from the wall
The best of all my pictures ;—nay, not that ;—
Then should I see the blushing limbs of her
Whom Cyprus worshipped, stretched at all their
length

Upon a mossy carpet ;—nay, nor that ;—
The days are gone wherein I took delight
In nymphs with shoulders whiter than the moon
Whose level glance searched out their hiding place ;
The best of all my pictures—there it hangs.

Art thou surprised ? let me forestall thy speech ;
I count that best—I, whose vainglorious hand
Was famed for tints of undulating flesh
Which seemed too much like nature, count that best
Because my heart was in it. Hear, my friend ;
Is't not a satire on the aims of life
That I, whose fame grew up to such a height,
Thank God my heart was never with my touch ?
It was not, Lucio ; evermore I scorned
The crowd of fools that murmured 'wonderful ;'

And scorned myself that fed their sensual eyes
With visions pure to me, but what to them ?
Here, as thou seest, there is not hand nor arm,
Nor any glimpse of half unmantled breast,
Suggestive in its roundness, for display
Of that unworthy arrogance of art
Which fain would make corruption beautiful.
Only two faces, Lucio—scarcely that ;
But I have striven to lodge a soul behind
The childish, yet maternal, glance of her
Who holds the slumbering Jesus, looking out
Beneath the purple drapery round her head
As if commanding silence. Wouldst thou know,
Beyond all this, what feeling leads me on—
Me, that have laughed at all religious rites
And now die here desiring not their aid—
To prize this most ? The answer serves again—
‘ Because my heart was in it ; ’ had I lived,
Though scorning still the drear conventional rule
Which addeth saint to saint until the mind

Grows sick with repetitions, yet had I
Made fresh beginnings, Lucio, in my art ;
The soul had been enthroned, and earthly things
Been held in right subjection ; then, perchance,
Something had stayed behind me on the earth,
Something more quick with spirit than with sense,
Whereon good men should ponder ; as for these—
These which have claimed the firstfruits of my skill,
These which have well performed their worthy part
To feed my mouth with bread, my heart with praise—
I know that these must perish ; dust to dust,
And Aphrodite once again resolves
Into a wandering foam-flake of the sea,
Whose taste is far less bitter than her love.

But these two faces, Lucio—thou shalt learn
What power it is that bindeth them to me.
Dost thou not call to mind a dark-haired child,
A little gipsy princess, as she seemed,
That once was wont to exercise her sway

Over my house, and called me by a name
Which I denied to all who questioned me,
Baffling their tongues, yet, haply, not their eyes,
With tales of guardianship ? Ah me ! Ah me !
Well might they watch her closely, well might I
Torment my heart with dread of that reproach
Which had not been so biting as my own !
For she was mine indeed ; O when she died
I thought that good had quitted me for ever,
And for a season gave myself a prey
To those unhallowed legends of despair,
Those whips of dread which monkish preachers use
To frighten men from evil. Then it was,
Or after that, when in a sombre mood
Too much at variance with the thought of life
For wonted occupation, that on this
(My sole acknowledgment of any creed
Beyond the faith in nature's loveliness)
I set myself, and as the picture grew—
Whether some vague and unconfessed idea

Of reparation led me to that end
I cannot tell—but as the picture grew
It took the well-known lineaments of her
Whose lot too sadly linked itself with mine ;
Not as in health, but as she looked and smiled
The day when last I saw her.

O that day!—

Nothing it profits, Lucio, any man
To hold his pleasure dearer than the good
Of those with whom he sojourns ; yet, methinks,
If it be true that none can journey clear
Of all offence, I would not that he sinned
Against the strong, whose power to recompense
Is wont to dull the sense of injury ;
But let his soul's accusers take their stand
Upon their very weakness, let them wield
No other weapon save the unpurchased love
Which unto them doth make forgiveness sweet,
But unto him how bitter ! O the pain
To be forgiven ! To lean upon a staff

Which seems secure, but in a moment breaks,
And leaves the leaner agonized with doubt,
Lest, in the great revisal of all wrongs,
That very love which prompted to forgive
Should turn the scale against him. Thus did she;
Nay, in that hour, when, cursed by all her kin,
She went to claim God's judgment from the world's,
Her last-breathed words were blessing. Was't not
strange?

Too strange it seemed, until my dream this night,
(If dream it be, and not the first faint glimpse,
As city towers are seen and lost again
By one who nears them, of the life to come)
Took all conjecture's too dispersed shafts,
And drew them to one centre.

For then, I thought, my soul had climbed beyond
This seeming, false reality, and stood
In the clear daylight of eternal laws
To judge its own deserving; for thou know'st

That not less great than is my scorn for those
Who preach the unlicensed gospel of despair,
Is this my faith in immortality,
And in the harvest righteous unto all ;
For God is just, and we, being part of Him,
Must needs, what time the blindness of the flesh
Is worn away, see all things as they are,
Even ourselves, and in that seeing, live.
So did I stand, while from some opening gulf
Came up, like troops of unremembered dead,
Acts—ay, and thoughts—all acts and all intents
Which once through me poured down into the stream
Of this world's history ; now and then came one
That wore a crown of glory, yet it seemed
As if the light dwelt alway in the crown,
And was not native to the wearer's face ;
But when, as oft, a felon form passed by,
Its proper shade waxed so intensely black
That even what glimmering showed them as they rose
Seemed bright around it ; side opposing side

They drew their ranks, and I was left between,
The vantage ground for which those threatening hosts
Should presently be striving. Then I said,
'Lo! these of light are far outnumbered now ;
And when she comes whose injury transcends
The sum of all iniquities beside,
Then will my lot be dreadful.' Even then
I looked far off, and saw against the gloom,
Like sails that shine against a seaward cloud,
Her coming on, like such a sail to shore ;
And like a breeze the light came after her,
And like the ripple round the cleaving stem
The waving tresses parted from her brow.
Then stood she still, and after some brief space—
How short or long I know not, for my thoughts
Had left all else to marvel—from her lips
Came words so sweet and untranslateable,
That, though the spirit heard, the memory still
Would mock the tongue that strove to copy them ;
And when she ceased, as those who on that mount

Of famed Transfiguration, from the cloud
Gathered new loneliness, so I with her
Was left alone, and all beside were gone.

Ah! let me doubt no more! 'Tis true, my friend,
The comfort that she gave me—far more true,
Though appertaining unto things unseen,
Than are the laws of those who contemplate
The world of matter;—far more true than these
Is that great law which gives unto the soul
The power, by deep repentance, not to turn
The course of nature's justice, but to bring
Out of that justice healing to itself,
And restitution in a grander kind
To those it sometime injured. When at last,
By much resolve and importunity,
Through much defeat of ignorance by wit,
Through the slow victory of the stronger will
Over the weaker, I had robbed her life
Of all save love for him that did the wrong,

Could the sharp anguish of my soul prevail,
To work a contradiction to the laws
By which in time the world is perfected ?
Yea, but one thing was left me ; for I strove,
By that same power which found her weak without,
To give her strength within ; to shift her gaze
From evil done, and fix it on the good
Which, sown as evil, yet might spring therefrom ;
To teach her how to judge between the act
And its resulting ; how to bear the scorn
With which the world might hail her, trusting all
To Him whose light is never crossed by cloud
Of guilt, nor dim with vengeful ignorance.
So died she, like a day in Summer-time—
A morn too bright, a noon o'ercast with storms,
But, after that, one short declining hour
Whose tear-washed beauty makes amends for all ;
So died she, leaving only unto me
That spotless child, a twilight messenger
Of reconciliation.

Hear me now ;—

This day will pass like many gone before,
Perchance the next—but eventide draws on,
And I must presently embark with those
Who, like the kind Phœaciens, shall convey
Me, slumbering, to a less perturbèd realm
Than that famed island, like whose wandering king
My soul hath lingered on the enchanted shore,
Not chained, but in the freedom of its will
Tenfold more guilty :—O my friend, what need
For men to smile upon the slips of one
That stands above them ? Doth that pardon him ?
Or in the glories of his genius shall
His conscience find a cure ? I tell thee, nay ;
For Nature so distributes, giving one,
Lest his great gifts should hoist him up with pride,
A constant thorn of sensual desires ;
And to another, lest desire's excess,
Should overmatch the God within the man,
Keenness of conscience even to misery.

These twain are met within me ; wherefore I,
Though haply erring less, have suffered more
Than many men whose lives will not be scanned
So closely as will mine. Take therefore heed
Of this my vision ; let it be for all
Who fain would look within my secret heart,
The witness of a man who sinned too much,
Who sought repentance out with many tears,
And found some absolution ere he died.

SONNETS.

K

I.

I saw a spirit, like a beauteous maid
All lonely mid a shadow-haunted wild,
Where, since the day that saw her last a child,
Her aimless feet, with scarce a guide, had strayed ;
In thick coarse weeds of bitter doubt arrayed,
That to her shape perforce were reconciled,
With eyes cast down, mute lips that sadly smiled,
She journeyed on, perplexed and oft afraid ;
But on a sudden kindled from above
A light that startled all that gloom of wood,
And, like the soft descending of a dove,
Dropped down a voice that changed her downcast
mood
With hands outstretched and face upturned she
stood
All radiant in the nakedness of love.

II.

O Love, thou art not what thou seem'st to be ;—
Thou art not vows, thou art not pleading tears,
Thou art not length of undivided years,
Nor days of joy, nor nights of mystery ;
We boast thy presence, yet we only see
The shadowy veil which still thy godhead wears,
When, rising up from banquet with thy peers,
Thou com'st to those who stretch their hands to
thee :—
O will the voice of no continual prayer,
The incense of no sacrifice, prevail
To part the cloud that hides thy face most fair ?
Thy glance shines forth, like lightning through the
hail,
And in the rift, most terrible and pale,
Death shakes his dart and beckons ; who shall dare ?

III.

When to my couch unsullied dreams repair,
I see thy shape, not as 'tis seen by day,
But all divine, and decked in such array
As decks the daughters of a world more fair ;
Thy face, the floating glory of thy hair,
Thy sweet low whispers, breathing of the May,
Thy soft deep glance that melts my soul away,
Thy smile that courts, and yet forbids, despair ;—
All these are there ; and to thee in my dream
I stretch my hands, like one who gropes for light
Amid the perils of a deepening stream ;
Then wake and find thee gone ; no sound nor sight
Relieves the dark, save some faint lantern's gleam,
Or clocks that count their sorrows to the night.

IV.

I saw, in shape of one but newly dead,
A fruitful nation falling to decay,
Her prime's soft beauty wasted all away,
And weeds of burial wrapped around the head,
Which, raised up once, had through the darkness shed
A light of joy to many souls astray,—
Whose words had been the life from day to day
Of those who mourned beside that voiceless bed ;
But while I wept, for very sympathy,
I heard a voice, perchance to those unknown,
Scattering the pain of death's dumb mystery ;
‘O'er every life descended from its own
The soul still reigneth, crowned eternally,—
The doom of dust shakes not the spirit's throne.’

V.

Methought in vision I beheld a stair
That rose from utter darkness, from the pit
Where captived sin and crowned corruption sit
Amid the skeletons of things that were;
But as it rose, the less polluted air
Grew bright with glory, falling over it
From heights unknown, which seemed divinely lit
With hopes more vast than all that vast despair;
And on its steps the many priests of song
Answered each other, while continually
They uttered forth the praises which belong
To that great law whose mystic harmony
Pairs soul with soul, and woos the scattered throng
To closer love through all eternity.

VI.

To be alone—to leave the restless town,
The breathless glare of each untiring street,
And slowly climb, between the walls of wheat,
Up to the silent summit of the down ;
And there to rest until the Northern Crown
Grows out against the day's retiring heat,
Until the purpling air grows cool and sweet,
And brooks begin to make their music known ;—
This joy, my friend, when doubts are at their worst,
When memory brings her accusations nigh,
Is not surpassed by him who roams athirst
Beneath a bright, inhospitable sky,
And comes anon to where fresh springs upburst
Under the palm grove's rustling melody.

VII.

Sight, sound, and speech,—O most mysterious trine
Of Heaven-appointed ministers that wait
Upon the suffering spirit's exiled state,
Bearing its sighs to regions more divine ;—
Whether mid pastures of the day's decline
Your footsteps are, or through the glorious gate
Of Summer mornings ye precipitate
The songs wherein faint night perceives her sign ;
Or in the cool of some retirèd spot
The air scarce moves to one propitious word,
Which, uttered once, is nevermore forgot ;—
How sweet your tales, how sad with hope deferred,—
With dreams of good which eye beholdeth not,
Nor lips can speak, nor ever ear hath heard.

VIII.

A sad grey twilight, after wind and showers,
With streaks of amber in the archèd west,
And one that grows, absorbing all the rest,
Herald of hope to drenched and shivering flowers ;—
Dearer to me than all unclouded hours—
Sweet babes that die on June's regretful breast—
Dearer than hues with which October best
Doth love to deck the sorrowing wood-nymph's
bowers,—
Is such an evening ;—then the heart grows full
With mute content, and pity which inclines
To help the feet whose lamp but feebly shines ;
Then could I walk until the roads grew dull,
To hear each gust that comes behind a lull
Rush through the beech and roar along the pines.

IX.

To be unhappy,—how the world doth dread
This word ‘unhappy’;—like a charm it lies
Across the gates of goodly enterprise,
Hindering their steps who else would freely tread
That rich dominion; who, as from the dead
Was once brought back the bride of many sighs,
Would else bring back, to gladden yearning eyes,
Deeds which too much are left in memory’s bed;
O let not such a hindrance be for me!
Rather than stand computing on the brink,
Let me launch forth, undoubting, when the sea
Is all astir with tempest—let me drink
Salt waves of maddening sorrow, ere I sink
Into that grief which is eternity.

X.

I love thee, Autumn ;—whether, rude and loud,
The moist battalions of the bordering main
Storm through the uplands, leaving in their train
The chastisement of all that hath not bowed ;
Whether the morning, decked in amber shroud,
Looks through the drift of gently falling rain,
Or noontide spreads above the steamy plain
Blue straits of sky, and continents of cloud,—
I love thee, Autumn ;—all thy charms are those
Which with no rich exceeding vex the mind,
Nor for vain visions barter its repose ;
But in their soft departure leave behind
That true content which bears with present shows,
Yet to their future meaning is not blind.

XI.

Say not, 'I am unworthy ;'—who doth know,
Before occasion wait upon his powers,
Before the slowly culminating hours
Bring round that one which firmly whispers 'Go ;'—
Who knows (I say) what strength to overthrow,
What skill to raise up more ethereal towers,
Lives, as the fruit beneath soon faded flowers,
Beneath youth's vain and all-imperfect show ?
For what is worth ? 'Tis neither wit nor sense,
Nor matchless conquest over Hydran lore,
Nor wealth of thought, nor lips of eloquence ;
But 'tis the power to talk with Providence ;
To mark what time God's finger points a door,—
To work in faith, and only look before.

XII.

He talked with Love ;—‘ Is there,’ he said, ‘ not one
Of all that throng whose meek and holy eyes
Look up to heaven as violets to the skies,
Within whose veins the sinless passions run
As pure as bubbling water o’er the stone,—
Is there not one whose heart would sacrifice
Some ease or wealth, to succour him that dies
For lack of pity, hopeless and alone ? ’
And Love made answer ;—‘ If perchance there be,
Yet vain all search, all arts that strive to make
Some conscious contract of felicity ;
But from mysterious slumber thou shalt wake,
And find her sweet face bending over thee,
As bends a dawn-crowned mountain o’er a lake.’

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

HERO.

THE slow light broadens with the freshening gale
That blows aside the dark attire of day,
And lets her glance paint up yon lonely sail
Which from the blue wave lifts a silver spray ;
One star remains of all heaven's company—
Light yields to light ;—but what is light to me ?

For I am old ;—ah me ! how long ago
Was I beloved,—beloved, and therefore young ?
How long since I was wont to watch the glow
That crimsoned all the breakers, till my tongue
Sent forth a cry, until my arms stretched wide
To see thy face come slowly through the tide ?

L

How many days, ye gods ! how many years
Since I went down, what time the darkness wore
To dawn, and found the shipwreck of my prayers
Dashed all at length upon the swirling shore ?
How long, my love, since on this sea-beat slope
Thy cold touch froze the drooping flower of hope ?

O magic grief ! that hast indeed the power
To make one night a long, long century,
To make the light-winged pulses of an hour
Each seem a night drawn out with agony !
O heartless grief ! that thus wilt age the mind,
Wilt steal all hope, yet leave the life behind !

No streaks of white these wandering tresses know ;
These eyes are dim, but only dim with tears ;
All vacant yet is this too lineless brow
For Time to write his history of years ;
Yet my soul's winters must uncounted be,
For thou art dead, and thou hast died for me.

O did no whisper ever haunt thy ear,
What time thy limbs were wont to taste the sea,
No hint of weakness warn thee to forbear,
And take thy choice of life or constancy ?
Or wert thou made too confident by fate,
That love unmatched might yield the fruit of hate ?

Doth reason say thy frown is for the wave
That called his fellows o'er thee, one by one ?
Or that thy hands are clenched against the grave
That stood close by until their work was done ?
Yet those rude powers most freely pardoned are,
And love doth call me only to the bar.

Against thee only I alone have sinned,
Against thee only, love, and none beside ;
And I alone—not warring waves and wind,
Nor faithless strength, nor strong, perplexing tide ;
The sole love mine, and only mine the gain—
Mine the sole loss, and mine alone the pain.

Therefore I charge you, though my love was fair
As all the gods, and more than any born,
Though earth shall aye be impotent to bear
A life so sweet, though all his kind shall mourn,
And ask the loveless ages as they flee
'Where is that passion which o'ercame the sea?'—

I charge you, winds, that henceforth on this day
Ye with no sign of tempest vex the sky,
Nor chant my love's name in a roundelay
To those who watch the noiseless sparks slip by,
While the dark canvas sings a soft sad tune,
And waning night brings up the waning moon.

And ye cold waves, I charge you mingle not
A lamentation with your murmuring swell;
Let love and grief be equally forgot—
The first embrace, the last intense farewell
And hear my last commanding, ere I leap
Into the arms that welcome me to sleep:—

That when your care hath rocked me to and fro,
Hath overmatched the armies of my breath,
Shown me a million coral caves below,
And wrapped me round in swathing bands of death,
Hath gently forced the too reluctant gates
Of those calm fields where now Leander waits ;—

Ye yield me up to those who sadly bore
This sea-robbed casket to its mistress' feet,
To lay me safe upon the self-same shore
Which nevermore shall clasp a wreck so sweet ;
So some shall find us resting side by side,
And know that death hath made a widow—bride.

A BROKEN YOKE.

ALL over thus, all over ;—I have been
Mad for a period of some fifteen years ;
Death is the cure for madness ; death cures mine,
But not my death.

O just-departed soul !

Dost thou look down now on my life, laid bare
By some fine touch of all-revealing powers,
Dost thou look down and curse me that I lied ?
They say God 'winks at madness ; if a hand,
A mother's hand, to feed her child that starves,
Makes sudden practice of the felon's art,
Her fault is nothing ; or if one should slay
The friend whose treachery hath laid waste his love ;

Or one pursued by legions of despair,
Hell-hounds that daunt the bravest, should be bold
To put the narrow rivulet of death
Between him and his enemies,—there stands
Compassion and forgiveness far more wide
For acts which else would ever chain the soul
Within the lowest pit. Can Truth be thus
Abused for some great purpose, yet remit
Her stripes for him that used her name in vain ?

Tell me that purpose, Memory, if thou canst ;
Go lightly over all my other sins,
For I confess them often ; say that I,
Being a poor man in the eyes of God,
Would fain have made conjunction with a soul
Whose wealth was past computing ; say that I,
Mixing some dross of sensual desire
With what I called true worship, suffered shame,
Was scorned, rejected, humbled ;—this I know ;
Say, too, but not too sternly, how my passion

Cursed what it grasped not, how, with dust of gold,
I stalked into the human market place,
And bid for what most pleased me—brought it home,
(The feeble life which late this cold clay held)
And from that dreadful drunkenness awoke
To self-contempt and anguish past control.
Repeat all this my folly, but forbear
To make aught smooth with whispers of excuse;
Let Him do that, who only knows in truth
How much my soul repented, if at all.

O wife all mine, whose husband I was not
Save in the world's conjecture—O my wife,
Look down from that fair city of repose
O'er which thy single talent, used so well,
Hath made thee ruler; look and understand.
Ah! it may be that in that other world
All Time doth seem too dreamlike for the gaze
Of those whose gazing lifts them up to God;
Yet for my sake perchance a look may fall

Earthward, unmissed, and make not wholly vain
My long-felt wish to hold thee in discourse
Whom death hath now set free from jealousy.
Rememberest thou that evening when we stayed,
But three weeks wed, beside the Southern sea
Whose level music even now I hear
Chanting strange songs throughout the olive shades ?
Rememberest how I left thee all the night,
And came at morn to find thee trembling, faint,
As fear and pale suspicion, turn by turn,
Wielded their tyrannous sceptres o'er thy heart ?
That night, I know, was peaceful ; ne'er, perhaps,
Had stars so bright been mapped on such a sea,
Never had air such fragrance, never wind
Such rests or such melodious intervals ;
Yet was there war in heaven ; all that depth,
Rich with the glory of ten thousand worlds,
Seemed but a cloud to shut some portent out,
Some strife of dreadful armies, keeping tune
With those that found their battle-field in me.

Rememberest thou ? Ah ! rather let me think
That what is ever-living, hath no need
To be drawn up from Time's forgetful deep
By cords of reminiscence—even this,
The victory of my nature o'er itself,
Is shown to thee by some that understand,
Who count my tears of bitterness, and say,
' God helped him to a falsehood for thy sake.'

Was it then God that helped me ? ' God is truth,'
' Tis said by many, doubting what they mean;
But as for me, I know it ; 'twas from Him
That I, than whom none better knew that truth,
Casting in wrath a cloak of lies about me,
Should, alway after, see the truth too plain,
Should see the food, and yet not eat thereof.
Nay, 'twas my own deserving ; 'twas the law
That visits all offences with their kind ;
And shall men dare to deck themselves with praise
For that late patience, which, if grasped before,

Had been the avoiding of their punishment ?
Or say, "Twas madness ; God will make men mad,
And He blots out their sinning ?" Let them not !
It is not only in that world to come
That Justice sits—nay, all is mercy there ;
But o'er this one her righteous scales are hung,
And he that sinneth, let him never think
Forth from her guarded prison-house to go
Until the last mite opes for him the door.
Is much guilt madness ? What is madness then
But the long-lasting sentence over guilt ?
Sin scourgeth sin, as light rewardeth search,
As darkness waits on blindness, wrath on wrath.

Let go the past, vain dreamer, let it go !
Thou shalt not find much comfort dwell therein,
Save only this—that God is merciful,
And bringeth light from darkness, e'en for those
Whose will would fain make darkness of His light ;
Light,—not to burn those righteous scars away,

But, by its constant shining, make them less
And less a grievance to the rising soul.
I have one child in heaven—I have still
One daughter here whose ripening maidenhood
Seems the forecasting of a glorious prime ;
And we have all one Father, O my wife,
Who haply yet shall join His children's hands.

GREEK WINE.

Quo te carmine dicam, Theria ?

‘ WELCOME to thy sparkling treasure,
 Product of the classic vine ;
 Welcome to the mystic legends
 Which around thy memory twine.’

Speaking thus, I drained the goblet
 Filled with Thera’s golden prime,
 Brought by many-handed labour
 From a strange barbaric clime.

Straightway swam the walls around me,
 As a wild disordered train,
 Led by Thought’s imperious finger,
 Rushed into my reeling brain.

Hark ! what shouts of exultation
Pierce the midnight's dewy shroud,
See the tossing lights descending
From the mountain wrapt in cloud.

Io !—Io !—nearer—nearer—
Sweeps the fierce triumphant song,
Louder swells the surging murmur
Of the Bacchanalian throng.

Watch along the startled forest
How the fitful torches gleam ;
See the wingèd child of Venus
Leading on the spotted team.

Purple robes about him flowing
On the golden car he stands—
He who spread his jocund conquest
Over all the willing lands.

Starlike leans his bride beside him,
She who, left on Naxos' shore,
By a mortal all forsaken,
Found a god who loved her more.

Round about the glowing axle
Press the ivy-cinctured train,
Bright eyed Mœnads dancing past me
Like a gust across the main.

Cymbals at their loudest clashing
Down the valley further stray;
Fainter still the torches flashing—
Fading with the dream away.

Then I saw Silenus, weary,
Sleeping on the chequered ground,
Sleeping in the noontide shadow,
While the Satyrs piped around.

Far away the vine-clad mountain,
Bathed in silent sunshine, rose,
Bees about the thymy fountain
Spread a murmur of repose.

Changed the scene once more, and led me
To that sad Thessalian vale,
There I saw the routed Centaurs
Fly before the warlike hail.

Darts and stones together whirling,
Bringing death from every side,
Every stroke the fierce avenger
Of a violated bride.

Ah! what self-consuming madness
Swayed the rough equestrian brood
Ah! what merciless destruction
Filled the festal cup with blood

Scarce the tumult of the battle
From my dream had passed afar,
When I heard an aged minstrel
Chanting strains of godlike war.

For a space the listening princes
Hushed the uproar in the hall,
While that deep and tragic measure
Told of Troy's unhappy fall.

Till at last the shipwrecked stranger,
Sitting all unheeded by,
Felt the secret water stealing
From his unaccustomed eye ;

Till, in tones that strove with weeping,
To the wondering bard he cried,
'Thou hast told of all my labour,
Thou hast sung my nation's pride.'

Ah! too soon the present called me
From the garden of the past!
Voices seemed to close around me—
Voices talking loud and fast;—

Girded with a paper label,
Mocking dreams so lightly gone,
Stood the bottle on the table,—
‘Will you kindly pass it on?’

LOVE AND KNOWLEDGE.

MOURN not too much those early joys which fade—
Sweet blossoms of that uncorrupted youth
Which in them only fain would see displayed
The sum of all that mates with peace and truth ;
So droops, when tempest overcasts the day,
When light and shade are with the clouds at strife,
So droops the fairest coronal of May
Slain by those showers which bear a nobler life ;
Yet doth the year, when fields are all a-wave
With golden wheat, still weep beside the grave
Of frail delights which once he could not save ?
So when thy fruit, from each tempestuous hour
Hath drunk new life, still adding power to power,
Less shalt thou prize, but not forget, the flower.

But not forget ;—O life were dark indeed,
If, with the dawn of purposes mature,
There came a voice to contradict thy creed
In all which once was deemed most true, most
pure ;
O rather then than seek the paths of truth,
Dwell on, my soul, with things that seem to be,
And, clasping close the simpleness of youth,
Leave wisdom's fruit ungathered on the tree :—
If love be all untrue, yet happier far
To fix thy gaze on that misleading star,
To walk in doubt, and be what day-dreams are ;
Than by the stairs of knowledge rise to find
A loveless intellect the perfect mind,
That scans the universe, yet spurns its kind.

EMILIA.

SHE sits apart, as if she would not hear
The sound of love and young light-hearted mirth,
Blind to the day, and feeling not the tear
That from her eyelid trembles to the earth.

Think not her thoughts unkindly, though they seem
Ranging the vault of joyless memories ;
Disturb her not, for she has had her dream,
And goes to watch it where entombed it lies.

She, too, hath loved ; well hath she known the
pleasure
That thrills the touch of closely clasping hands,
The light, the warmth, that only find their measure
In the blue deeps that girdle southern lands.

She, too, hath hoped, till hope became her being,
And in that hope she climbed from age to age ;
It died,—she died ; yet all her wrecked foreseeing
Bought not affliction's rightful heritage.

Dying, she lived ; not as a burdened spirit
Whose glad departure mocks the belfry's dole,
But as a corpse, still sentenced to inherit
The worst of life, and live without a soul.

Yet for that love she hath a dwelling made
Within her bosom's most unchanging deep,
Far from the world as some mysterious glade,
Shadowed by hills, and screened by woods so
steep—

That never there the searching gaze of noon
Can touch the ice-cold rivulet that shoots
Through fretting rocks, nor yet the winter moon
Make plain the horror of the twisted roots.

Where not the sailor's token can be read—
The guiding Pole—but Cassiopeia's chair
Glides on its midnight journey overhead—
Sad sign of patience frozen with despair.

Thither, mid silent pauses of the strife
With self-sought care, that memory comes again,
A ghost that haunts the palaces of life,
Seeking some quiet resting place in vain.

Then for a moment wakes within her breast
The joy, the dread of loving, like a gleam
That dies at evening in the rainy west;—
Disturb her not, for she hath had her dream.

SPRING SONG.

LISTEN!—a thousand beaded drops
Are splashing on the eaves,
And bending down the tender tops
Of newly-opened leaves.

The winding stream's unmoving tide
Is dark with moving spray,
The level fields their freshness hide
In cloaks of dreary grey.

And where anon the mists are broke,
Like some vast funeral pile
Half seen through depths of drifting smoke,
Stands up a pine-clad isle.

O child ! 'tis not the cloud thou seest—
Thou hearest not the rain ;
'Tis not the gust's returning strength
That beats upon the pane.

But from the river's reedy brink,
From every brightened sod,
Rejoicing earth leaps up to drink
The equity of God.

And where the larches scale the slope,
From many a pendant string
An angel wakes his psalm of hope—
The angel of the Spring.

A FAREWELL.

GRIEVE not, my queen, that when we parted
Upon that choice of final ways,
Diverging still from whence they started
Till each to each is lost in haze;—

Grieve not that when the words were spoken
That loosed my pinnace from the shore,
We paused to interchange the token
Of love that can be ours no more.

I cannot call that kiss unholy,
Although the world might well condemn ;
Our lips discoursed of melancholy,
And pain, not pleasure, tempted them.

The world hath favour for possessors,
Hath laws to keep their kingdom free ;
Such laws are just to all transgressors,
But what, my queen, to you and me ?

DEEP WATERS.

O DEEM not the unwrinkled brow
Bespeaks a mind at rest;—
No more the ice-supported snow,
Untouched in Alpine rifts, can show
How far the torrent whirls below,
How froths its rocky breast.

The deeper strikes a mortal wound,
The deeper lies its scar;
So one may stand to hear around
Light mirth or music's pleasant sound,
And smile to think that none have found
How keen his tortures are.

But hast thou watched, when, all alone,
He entertains his care,—
The tearless sigh, the inward groan?—
Whatever griefs may be thine own,
Be grateful if thou hast not known
A grief which none may share.

THE POET'S DREAM.

HE dreamed, but not of broadening lakes
Whose every crisping wave
Threw back the light, in crimson flakes,
Of day that knew no grave.

No airy shape deceived his eyes,
No touch his yearning sense,
Nor did the songs of Paradise
Seem floating down from thence.

But from the hour of mustering spheres
Until their ranks grew thin,
He watched with one whose ceaseless tears
Confessed relinquished sin.

All night she wept ; she rose at morn
And walked by tower and grove ;
She trained her heart to bear with scorn,
But only met with love.

The landscape vision fades again,
Unreal is all the hue
Of skies in sleep ;—he dreamed of men,
But was his dream more true ?

ENTER.

HAVE ye heard it, have ye heard it ?
Have ye heard that wondrous psalm ?
Falling from the heights of morning,
Sweet, triumphant, clear, and calm ?

All the clouds stood still to hear it,
All the breezes held their breath,
As it swept by moor and valley,
Speeding to the house of death.

‘Enter, enter, enter, enter !’—
(So methought the numbers ran,)
‘Break the bars that would prevent her
Death, supremest friend of man.

Burst the shades of life asunder,
Let the unprisoned soul survey
All the glory, all the wonder,
Of the one unshaded day.

‘Hath she been her own reprov’?
She shall hear of praise instead;
Hath she doubted? doubts are over,
Now that faith itself is dead.

‘Was she wronged? those wrongs are righted
Was she blinded? she shall see;
Was she oft by evil frightened?
Lo! the throne of purity.

‘Enter, enter, enter, enter,—
Through the door that opes in pain,
Through the door that opes on glory,
Nevermore to close again.’

We have heard it, we have seen it,
Seen that glory, heard that strain;—
Ah! we murmured, could we see it—
Could we hear it once again;—

Could some echo near us linger,
Could some twilight round us stay,
Such a gleam as evening leaveth
Watching round the tomb of day;—

Then should life submerge its boundaries,
Death his own consoler be,
Grief become the lord of promise,
Hope be made reality.

A PERFECT DAY.

‘TELL me thy wish,’ it seemed a voice
Cried from the circling world of fays,
‘Tell me thy wish, and take thy choice
Of joys that fix thy gaze.’

I heard, and in that self-same hour
All loftier aims had lost their sway ;
‘Give me,’ I said, ‘indulgent power,
Give me a perfect day.

‘A twilight nursed in depths of dew,
Far, far beyond some eastern pass,
Whence crimson fires come bursting through
To light the beaded grass.

‘A morning bright with rolling mists
That trail above the trackless down,
With lakes between like amethysts
Set in an emperor’s crown.

‘A noon all silence, save a breeze
That bends the rush, and dims the mere ;
All light, save one lone cloud that sees
Its form in trout-pools clear.

‘An eve whose breadth of glory makes
An Autumn mid the woods of June,
And, like a skiff, through golden lakes
Leads down the curvèd moon.

‘One more, to make the day divine,
One bounty more, kind power, bestow ;—
A friend whose spirit speaks to mine
When words have ceased to flow.’

PRO AND CON.

O WERE it but to leave behind
This lightless prison-house of care,
This awful burden of the mind
Which none will ever stoop to share;

O were it but to meet with those
Whose better knowledge alway sees
What passion for a long repose
Springs up from sorrows such as these;—

How soon, how soon the deed were done
Which cuts the strongest life in twain!
How sweet to watch the falling sun,
And say, 'Thou shalt not rise again!'

But in a vision I have seen
A soul that madly forced its way
From earth to heaven, yet failed to win
The rest which seemed shut out by clay.

All empty spread the vaults on high,
All mute the once resounding floor,
And all the griefs it sought to fly
Flocked in behind it through the door.

SONG.

O SWEET warm rain ! O draught of life !
O hastener of a thousand joys !
Come when the skies are all at strife,
And all the landscape filled with noise ;
Come when the day prolongs its hours,
Come from the South when North-winds flee,
Come to a million pining flowers,
And set them free.

O sad warm rain ! O tears of death
That sound throughout the reddening grove !
O drops more dismal than the breath
Which tells the soul it may not love !

Come when the young moon shows a cleft
Across some wild October sky,
Come to what flowers the year hath left,
And bid them die.

SHADOWS IN THE DOOR.

DOST thou well remember, darling,
 In the days so long gone by,
One sweet twilight in September
 When the evening winds were high ;—

When we whispered in the doorway
 While the fire was bright within,
Whispered things which yet we know not,
 Ceasing only to begin ;—

How we whispered in the doorway
 While without the darkness grew,
Till we gathered speech from silence,
 Wondering only ' Is it true ? '

How we joined our lips together
Thinking we were all unseen,
Dreaming not my father watched us
All across the noiseless green ?

Oft about that twilight, darling,
I have lingered in my thought,
Till a quaint and solemn meaning
From its shadows hath been wrought.

How the world that lies in darkness,
How the souls that houseless roam,
Watch far off the life of woman
Seen against the light of home;

How not e'en the smallest action,
Be it worthy blame or praise,
Lacks the burden of a message
To the hearts of those who gaze.

Some have fallen ;—she can help them,
Lift them where they stood before ;—
Some have stumbled ;—hath she pardon
If through her they stumble more ?

ALONE.

‘Que ferait une âme isolée dans le ciel même?’

SHARP is the pang that rends her heart
Who watches where her child is laid
Sharper when wedded lovers part
And orange yields to cypress shade.

Yet even to these the sense of grief
Will lighten with each gliding age,
And present sorrow find relief
In reckoning up its heritage.

O sharpest grief which few can know,
Surpassing all the sting of death,
By time untamed, thou still dost grow
As life seeks out the downward path.

He feels thy presence in whose breast
All night the festive lamps have burned,
Who calls for some to share the feast,
And finds his invitation spurned.

Who sees the morning, blank and grey,
Startle each pane with shivering light,
To mock him with a sunless day
Who turneth from a songless night.

He feels a summons in the air ;
' The night,' he saith, ' is wholly gone ;
The world awakes, but I must fare
For evermore, alone, alone ! '

WHERE WITH ?

How shall I come before thee, love,
When ne'er an earthly gift
Hath power thy sovereign will to move,
The sacred veil to lift
Which screens thy beauty from the sight
Of those who could not bear its light ?

How shall I come before thee, love,
When each impassioned song
That sways the crowd, could only prove
Thy fortressed heart too strong ?
And backward from its walls be tost
Likes waves that vex a marble coast ?

How shall I come before thee, love,
When each bright thought of mine
Is but a lake that looks above
To catch some rays of thine ;—
A glass within whose field is shown
A lesser light, but still thine own ?

O heart ! lay by thy proud attire,
Lay by thy boasted crown ;
Nor think a favouring smile to hire
With what thou castest down ;
Before her throne lay down thyself—
This doth she claim, and not thy pelf.

Thyself, with no disguiser's skill,
Unfaithfully to shroud
Whatever tear-washed stains of ill
Thy history becloud ;
Or make an all-corrupt desire
Show like true love's ethereal fire.

For then those all-divining eyes
Shall pierce a veil so thin,
And darts of sudden scorn surprise
The lie that lurks within ;
And thou to self-contempt shalt fall—
Contempt that woundeth worst of all.

SINCERITY.

‘HASTE not to answer, haste is blind,’
 He said, ‘but as thou weighest my prayer,
 Keep this request before thy mind,
 This only, “Be sincere.”

‘My heart its one desire hath shown,
 My aims, my hopes are known to thee ;
 If thou canst blend them with thine own,
 Be sure thou lovest me.’

Sincere?—I scarce could understand
 A tithe of what his soul would do;
 And yet it must be something grand,
 For he believes it true.

O

Sincere ?—I know not if there be
One test for woman, one for man ;
And yet methinks that each should see
The truth as best he can.

If love be God's unbounded law,
The spring which unto all divides,
May not two souls its pureness draw,
And yet from different sides ?

Ah ! little know they what they ask
Who thus a woman's heart would try ;
To weigh, to reason,—such thy task,—
But mine to love or die.

Before thy thoughts had found a voice,
My heart, instructed to divine,
Had wandered forth to meet thy choice,
Had felt that it was thine.

And shall I all that truth gainsay,
For all that trust return a lie?
Were this to love?—Away, away!
Thou false sincerity!

LET IT ALONE.

POSSESSED of mile-wide gardens boasting all
Which art hath power to show,
Why snatch away this wild thing from the wall ?
Leave it to grow.

It hath a joy we know not ;—fresh, cool nights,
First-fruits of evening rains,
And winds that wheel their circle of delights
From sea-girt plains.

It hath no pain of knowledge ; here it clings
Because the blast was rude,
And o'er the rock a trembling veil it flings
For gratitude.

Leave it to grow ; be thine the rose-roofed bowers,
The golden orb that nods
Complacence on its retinue of flowers ;—
But this is God's.

THE MORNING WATCH.

THE star which midnight held above
Now to the west itself betakes ;
How fares it with my heart's own love,—
Sleeps she or wakes ?

If she doth sleep, then o'er her breast
The very soul of peace doth brood,
To keep the music of her rest
Soft, calm, subdued.

And o'er her sense a veil is spread,
In sweet fantastic figures wrought,
Whence now and then her mind is fed
With dreamy thought.

Or if she wakes, her days revolve
Around their central orb of love,
In breathing pictures that dissolve
E'en as they move ;—

That into sudden gloom depart,
Yet leave each one a word to tell
The watching sentries of her heart
That all is well.

NIGHT.

BREATHE on me, Sleep, with thy dream-scented
breath,

Strange as a breeze that comes, and dwells, and dies
Around those flowers all drooping to their death

When Autumn looks from saffron-tinted skies ;
Breathe on me, Sleep ; waft to me from thy halls
Glimpses and gleams of worlds whose Summers
last

Beyond all bounds, all frost which here entralls
The year's old age with chains too rude and fast ;
Waft this to me, and waft thou far away
Each thought of care, which, like a cloud at noon,
Rose up to haunt me through declining day,

Seeming to threat a night of tempest soon ;
And when, kind Sleep, thy realms established are,
Crown her their queen who is my soul's true star.

MORNING.

SHINE forth, sweet Light, from under dark grey eaves
Of cloud, whose peaks are presently o'erspread
With that faint glory, which, what time she leaves
Her watery couch, doth bind Aurora's head ;
Shine forth, and through the window where she lies—
The very mistress of my pleading heart—
Pour, with thyself, a thousand melodies,
Caught by the wind from regions where thou art ;
Touch thou her closèd eyelids with thy hand,
Tempt them to open,—then anon retire
While by her head the sounds of morning stand
Urging my cause with mingling voice and lyre ;
And watch thou, Light, if to my name she moves,
For if she doth, then may I swear she loves.

INVOCATION.

O BOSOM, fragrant resting-place of love,
O feet too white for this rough wilderness,
O cheeks that burn, O lips that only move
 To make mine own their thirsty state confess ;
O eyes too bright for aught but wandering stars
 That from their orbs have dropped, awhile to taste
Earth's joy, and found a beauty which debars
 Their slow return, once promised all in haste ;—
O as you do most constantly attend
 On her whose soul your mistress is, and mine,
Be faithful yet, and your best service lend
 To deck each entrance to that spotless shrine ;
That when I come to learn her sweet behests
Your hands may lead me straight to where she rests.

‘ΓΝΩΘΙ ΣΕΑΥΤΟΝ.’

To know thyself,—how hard the task—
How sad to bend o'er Memory's scroll,
And from its records turn to ask,
‘What moved thee to this crime, O soul?’

Yet know thyself, and own the good
As much as thou dost hate the ill,
For only thus is understood
Which faults were weakness, which were will.

Then shalt thou look with clearer eyes
Upon the mystery of sin,
And think, when doubts again arise,
‘I erred without, but not within.’

PARALLELs.

A LONELY sail, a speck that glides
Across the early greys of morn ;—
Yet many eyes are watching there,
And many hearts forlorn.

A lonely star, a spark just seen
Across the breadth of many a year ;—
Yet worlds revolve within its light,
And moons are changing there.

A lonely tear that moves, scarce felt,
Across a cheek perplexed by sin ;—
Ah me ! what depth of hope is there
Could we but look within !

THY world, O God, is full of light—
We turn our backs, and it is gone;
As to each planet comes the night
What time it turneth from the sun.

Thy ways to us are all unknown,
And dark, because we will not see ;
We walk in shadows of our own,
And vainly think they fall from Thee.

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